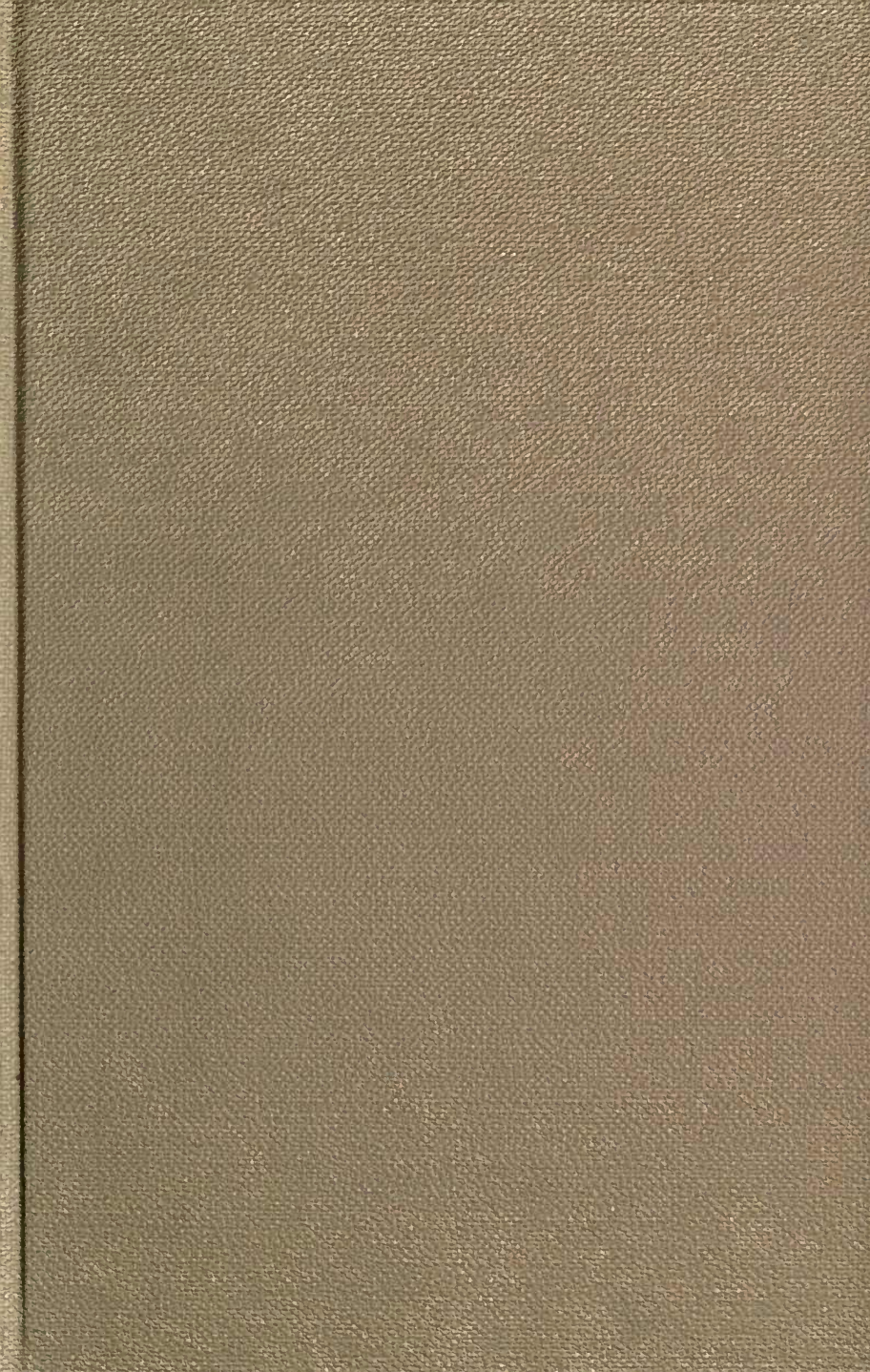
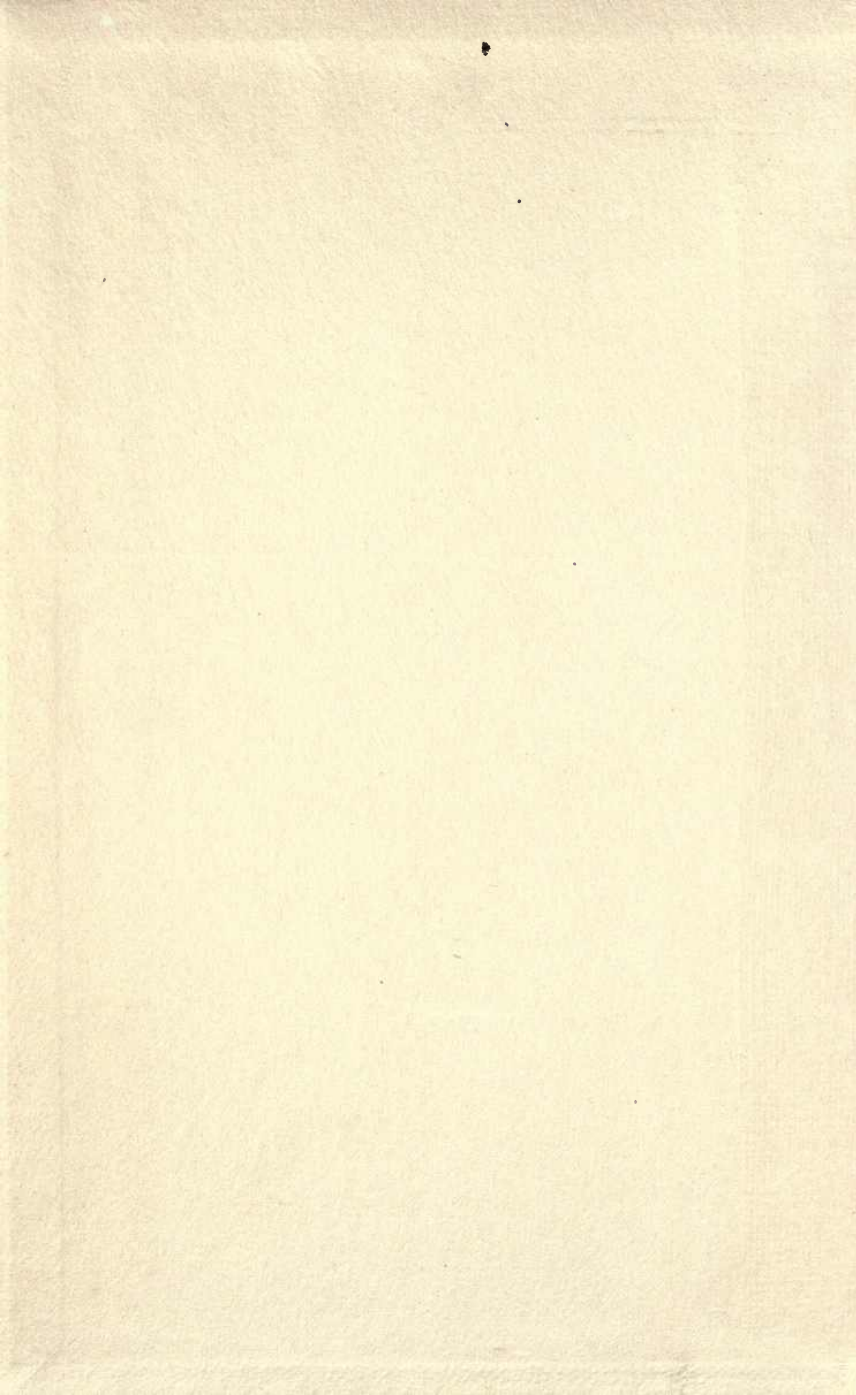






"AS IT LOOKED TO HIM"



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"AS IT LOOKED TO HIM"

INTIMATE LETTERS ON
THE WAR

BY

FIRST LIEUT. EMMET N. BRITTON
U.S.A.

HEADQUARTERS COMPANY, 363D REGIMENT
A. E. F.



PRIVATELY PRINTED AT SAN FRANCISCO
DECEMBER MDCCCCXIX

DEDICATION

TO AN AMERICAN MOTHER AND DADDY
WHOSE GENEROSITY AND PATRIOTISM
MADE POSSIBLE THE WRITING OF THESE
LETTERS, THEY ARE AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED BY THEIR SON

EMMET NICHOLSON BRITTON

FOREWORD

OCTOBER 23, 1919.

IN COMMON with many thousands of patriotic mothers and fathers, we realized the necessity for upholding the honor of our country, and determined at the beginning of the war to make such sacrifices as we should be called upon to do. The greatest of sacrifices made by fathers and mothers was the offering of their sons in the service.

We were proud that our youngest boy, following the true spirit of patriotism, determined to be one of the first ten thousand to offer himself, not only for the protection of his own home but of the homes of those in oppressed Europe. Our boy had no hesitancy as to his duty, although he left behind him his wife and two loved ones. He went through the fray, and we thank God that he was spared to return to us.

His simple story is told in the following pages; they speak of his ambitions, his hopes, his sufferings, with all the ardor of youth but with the modesty of a true soldier.

We at home tried to do our part, and did it better than it possibly could have been done because of the realization that he was "Over There" doing his part.

This book is printed and preserved for him and his family—a record of which anyone should be proud.

Florence E. Britton.

John A. Britton.

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PRELUDE

AT HOME, AUGUST 5, 1919.

DEAR DAD O'MINE:

SOMEWHERE in my browsing through English literature I have read that when a man feels himself slipping, and is about to become "passe," he writes his "Memoirs" or Autobiography. So it has been with quite a bit of reluctance that I have started my little preface to the letters written to you from overseas. As all of the books will be given to just the family and a very few personal friends I am liable to become familiar, sentimental and even maudlin in spots, but knowing that you will rigidly censor this I am giving myself a free rein.

Born in Oakland on January 21, 1892, I spent the first twelve years of my life in that town, growing up as almost every healthy young American does with a love of the great outdoors, and being blessed by my Irish forebears with an extremely vivid imagination I had a great love also for books and adventure, and rainy days would find me stretched out on the floor in front of the fireplace, elbows on the floor and chin cupped in my hands, eagerly devouring all of the books of life in the open and adventure that I could lay my hands on. Between these two youthful loves of mine I never had a restful moment for one of them was bound to be pulling at me all the time, and as a result my habits of living became so irregular as to undermine what little strength a hard siege of scarlet fever had left me.

So at the age of twelve I was sent to St. Matthews Military School, near San Mateo, with my brother, John A. Jr., who was three years older than I and four

years ahead of me in school. That breaking away from home at that age proved to be one of the turning points in my life. Until that time, being the youngest of five children, I had been more or less spoiled, partly on account of my having been ill, and I had become selfish, bad tempered and my feelings were very easily hurt. During the first three months at school I was certainly a homesick little lad but a youngster of that age can adapt himself to his environment very easily, and consequently by the time of the winter rains I was a typical boarding school boy, self-reliant, independent, cocky as a young bantam rooster, and all of the meanness had either been kicked or knocked out of me, or regular meals, exercise and regular hours had brought me around to a more normal way of looking at things.

I graduated from St. Matthews in 1910, having taken part in all of the school activities, especially football. Up until this time I had figured on becoming a doctor but I entered the University of California that fall registered in the College of Commerce. For four years I attended the University, being registered at various times in the Colleges of Social Science, Pre-Medical and Dental. As a result I received a broad liberal education and I have never regretted the action that I took.

Leaving the University in May, 1914, I started to work for the Pacific Gas & Electric Company in a camp in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, just above Drum Power House. Here I worked at whatever presented itself and while one day I might be shovelling concrete, the next day I might be a "bull-cook," carrying coal and slops for the cook. It was there I first came to know James Martin, the Manager of Drum District, one of the most loyal workers I have ever known, a man setting a hard pace for his employees but expecting them to



Emmett Britton.
1st Lt - 3rd Inf.

give to their work the same untiring zeal and devotion that he put into his own work. With such a man to set the pace I knew that I would learn, so I decided to stay with him until I knew that district better than any other man in it.

In July, 1914, I was called to San Francisco and much to my surprise put aboard the "Tenyo Maru" for Japan. It was a wonderful trip and I spent a week in the "Flowery Kingdom," loving California better the more I saw of Japan, but it was just what I needed to finish my education. September of the same year saw me back in Drum District with headquarters at Colfax where the district office is located and once more I tore into the work of learning all I could of the old "South Yuba Water" System and the improvements that had been made on it by the present company.

I made some mighty close friends up in the hills and talked to the "old timers" at every available opportunity upon the past history of the system. For three years I was out every day covering the ground on foot, horse-back, on skii and in automobile, and loving the game, gave it all I had of body and brain and strove to make all of the men believe in and work for "Pacific Service" harder than they would for their own salvation. I have put in a good many sixty hour shifts to keep the water going down the ditches while the people in the valley below turned out their lights and went to bed little knowing or caring of the fight that was being made against snow, wind, ice and zero weather.

When in November, 1914, I was promoted to "General Man" with an income of ninety dollars per month, I figured that two could live as cheaply as one and began to close a life contract with Reba Boalt of St. Helena, who was at that time attending Mills College.

On March 24, 1915, the contract was signed by both parties, with proper ceremonies and in front of a goodly number of witnesses at Grace Church, St. Helena, and three days later we were up in the hills. Right here and now I want to state that I have always been lucky, but the day I made Becky Boalt add the name of Britton to her legal signature was the luckiest day of my life. No man has ever had a better wife and it would be impossible to find a kinder, more cheerful, more sensible or more patriotic little lady in the whole realms of the U. S. A. She has not only been my help-mate but my check-mate, when I needed it, and to her may all be happiness and love for all of her days. A perfect mother, a perfect mate, and as cheering in the hour of darkness as the song of a sky lark high overhead on a dewy morning. God bless her.

The world war had broken out while I was on my way to Japan and when on April 6, 1917, the United States declared war against the Central Powers, Becky B. and I talked it all over and I immediately offered my services to the Government, as I had graduated from a military school with the rank of a Cadet Major and was egotistical enough to believe that I would lead soldiers even as I had led my men in the hills.

So on May 1, 1917, I left Colfax and a few days later entered the first Officers' Training Camp at the Presidio of San Francisco. For three months we were pushed and pulled around by a bunch of West Pointers who despaired of ever making officers of us, and, feeling as if I had been pulled out of a whirlpool, I found myself on the morning of August 14, 1917, with a commission of a Second Lieutenant in the Reserve Corps in one hand and travel orders to proceed to Camp Lewis, Washington, not later than August 29, in the other. Two weeks' time



THE AUTHOR
1 YEAR

in which to get all dolled up as an officer with several hundred dollars' worth of equipment and get to a point a thousand miles north of San Francisco.

I won't try to describe the bustle and hustle of getting fixed up and away but on the destined day I landed knee deep in dust on the soil of Camp Lewis. Try to imagine a town built in the shape of a horseshoe large enough to accommodate forty thousand men, all the buildings being made from one set of blue-prints and put up in three months. For a few days we simply sat around trying to get used to ourselves and on September 4th, the 363d Infantry sprang into life with Colonel Harry LaT. Cavanaugh commanding, and, with about one hundred other "officers by special Act of Congress," I had the right to wear cross guns with 363 on them on my collar. In the next two days the Colonel tried to learn all of our names and previous conditions of servitude so on September 7th in G. O. No. 1—Hq. 363d Infantry, I was assigned to Headquarters Company as Signal Officer. I suppose because I had worked for a Public Utility, one of whose jobs was the supplying of electricity to a bunch of chronic kickers generally known as the Public, I was picked out for a technical job about which I had no knowledge whatever.

For the next eight months I studied and worked harder than I ever had before and the one month that I put in at Fort Sill in Oklahoma studying various forms of signalling, from radio to arm signals, was the hardest of all. We all knew that we were due to depart for France, so when I received word that I would leave in the advance party to attend the First Corps Signal School I was not really surprised but I was some excited.

On June 19th, 1918, I left Camp Lewis, taking two of my Sergeants, O'Brien and Trusty, with me. My bunkie

and inseparable companion, Lieutenant Arthur L. Erb of San Francisco, was also in the advance party and I honestly believe a finer lad never lived. Square as a die, a straight shooter and a wonderful officer, he is the best friend I own, and our friendship was proved on the field of battle in more ways than one. Our trip across the continent to New York was uneventful but when we landed in Camp Merritt and had leave to go to New York, Art and I looked up his brother and for three days we were on the go all of the time. It was a grand and glorious send off and one that tickled the cockles of the heart and formed the basis of many a conversation during the fourteen long days between New York and Liverpool while we were dodging subs. On June 28, 1918, we embarked on the White Star Liner, *Cretic*, dropping down past the "Old Girl with the Lamp" the next morning and becoming an integral part of the American Expeditionary Force.

EMMET.



THE AUTHOR
12 YEARS

CHAPTER I

SOMEWHERE ON THE ATLANTIC,
MONDAY, JULY 1, 1918.

MY DEAR DAD AND PEOPLE ALL:

THIS is the fourth day out and so far no excitement of any sort, although plenty of work to break the monotony of a long sea voyage which is progressing very slowly—not over twelve knots an hour. I have no idea how many troops we have on board but, believe me, we are utilizing every spare cubic inch to store them away. This ship used to be on the Mediterranean run and is not a first class vessel—nowhere near as nicely appointed as the *Tenyo Maru* or the *Siberia*—though of the vintage of 1902. The crew and all are English and so different from the Asiatics of my other voyage. Some of the little cabin boys would warm the cockles of your heart, lads of six, eight and ten years of age with faces like cherubs, in sailor suits, but with their cockney expressions ruining the whole picture as soon as they open their mouths. But they are brave little tads with it all, and even when pattering around barefoot over the wet decks in the early morning you will always get a bright smile flashed at you if you speak to them.

Day before yesterday I was down in one of the compartments of what used to be the steerage, with the men. The idea is to have an officer in one of those compartments at all times so that in case of an emergency he will promptly stop all tendencies toward a panic, see that all men get on deck, quickly but without disorder, and then the officer follows. He is armed, of course, and has instructions to enforce discipline no

matter what means he has to employ. I was down below for eight hours, from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m., and we were having a little rough weather at the time. The air was foul and ninety-five of the men were sick, and quite often we shipped a sea through the open hatchway, so there was about six inches of water all over. It seemed like one of Gustave Dore's pictures of the Inferno with a flickering half light showing the tossing, writhing figures of close-packed men, suffering bodily discomforts and mental unrest. For none of them were allowed to remove a single garment, though it was stifling hot and they slept with their life-preservers on.

However, that is all over now. The sea is calm, the air warm and balmy, we are out of the danger zone and the men are over their *mal de mer* and able to undress fully and so sleep comfortably. We have about four days now of easy going when we enter the danger zone again and we will be in it about four days.

Through all of their trials and troubles the men have maintained a wonderful spirit and they are all ready and eager to get in and finish it all up. One of my sergeants was horribly sick and was lying on deck all in as I came by. I asked him how he felt and he sprang to attention at once, though he had to hold on to a rope to keep on his feet. "Pretty rotten, sir," he answered, "but I'm going to give the first Hun I meet hell for making me suffer like this." And that is the spirit all the way through; whatever hardship they suffer they blame the Hun for it and are firmly determined to take it out of his hide.

Yesterday I was on watch for six hours, being posted well forward on the starboard side of the vessel, and though I strained my eyes and used my binoculars incessantly, I saw nothing except flying fish, sea-weed



THE AUTHOR
21 YEARS

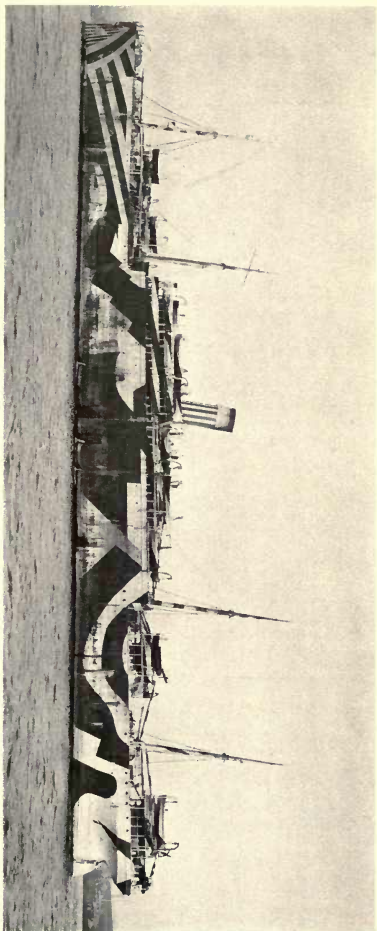
and the other vessels of our consort. Today I go on watch below with the troops again, so what with watches and boat drills twice a day you can see we have but little time to run around.

When we dropped out past the Statue of Liberty we picked up the other members of the fleet and our convoy. All of the convoy accompanied us for about a hundred miles, when all except the cruiser turned back. It still is leading the way and the balance of us are following in a staggered column three abreast. It is quite a wonderful sight, especially at night when you know a ship is close but you cannot see it. For all lights are out and no one is allowed to smoke on deck, so you can imagine us slipping along like ghosts that have been daubed at with a paint brush and bucket by an insane futurist artist. In the garish light of day they are hideous, like Indians with their war paint on, but in the soft half light of dawn or dusk they trick the brain like a drunken phantasy, some seeming much smaller, some like two ships passing, some resembling a cloud formation, and all on account of some vari-colored paint, apparently daubed on without rhyme or reason.

I can't grasp the idea yet that I have embarked upon the Great Adventure. This seems like a pleasure voyage and all the lookouts, lifeboat drill and all other work so much child's play. Like when I was a kiddie in Linda Vista I used to take my air gun and stalk Indians through tall grass in the vacant lots. It is hard to realize I am playing a big vital game of hare and hounds, and I, myself, am one of the hares; that there are people out hunting for me with all manner of devices; that some forty million people would be glad if I and all of my travelling companions were sunk to the bottom of this old salt pond. I am afraid we have all led too sheltered

and secluded and peaceful lives for that realization to strike home. Nor will it until we actually see or feel some violence directed directly against us. Then, I imagine, all our fighting blood, our primal instinct to injure that which would injure us, will become rampant. We will allow all of our primal instincts to run rife and the lust to kill will come. Right now I bear no personal hate toward the Hun but more of the feeling that I have had when sitting on a court-martial. The Hun has done wrong, therefore he must be punished. But no bitterness is in my soul and if I can fully do my duty without it entering into my heart I pray to God that I may do so. For bitterness is too liable to warp one's outlook on life so that none of the beautiful things may be enjoyed. Did you ever notice that if you have done a good deed the whole world seems a far more beautiful place, the birds sing sweeter and you are glad you are alive? But if you have hate or bitterness in your heart you do not notice the beauties or the birds, and the desire to live and love is nil. Therefore my prayer. But make no mistake, if in order to lick the Hun it is going to be necessary for me to hate, then I will be one of the best little haters in the A. E. F. That will have to be decided later, and if hate I must, then after my return it will be up to all of you by the loving kindness you have always shown me to draw that out of my nature so that once more I may enjoy the beautiful things that made life worth while.

Life always has been very much worth while to me, for I have had a wonderful life. I have been given every comfort and luxury that is good for a man to have. With my wonderful wife I have *lived* for three years amongst the glories of God in the high hills and been nearer to Him than any of you (conceited? yes), and I



WHITE STAR S. S. "CRETIC"—BOUND "OVER THERE."
JUNE 28, 1918

have been blessed with two wonderful babies. If I had my life to live over again I would not change it one iota for fear that the climax—my three years of supreme happiness with my wife—might not be quite the same. We have been perfectly happy in our love, and no matter what happened my dear little lady was always the same dear, sweet, kind and precious girl. It is because I care so much for her that I have come to this. Think that over; it is not an enigma, but a plain unvarnished truth.

For the many things you have done for me, all of you, please accept my thanks. More I cannot give you right now. And may the good God bless you all and keep you all safe and sound until I come back. And when I do come back, kill the fatted calf; for the prodigal will return, never again to roam very far away. Just lots of love to all you people and keep a good thought for

THE KID.

CHAPTER II

FOREIGN IMPRESSIONS

FRANCE, JULY 17, 1918.

MY VERY DEAR PADRE:

JUST a wee bit of a note, Dad, to tell you that I have sent you quite a long letter via Becky. I hope you don't mind my doing that as it saves me quite a bit of writing. In other words, instead of having to repeat a lot of description in the letters to her I can spend all of that time in telling her how much I love her. So I can kill two birdies with one brick.

I am not keeping a diary, although I know I should, so will you keep my letters or have a copy of them made for me so I can keep them? They are merely impressions set down by me in a haphazard manner, but when I get back it will be interesting to note just what my impressions were at first sight. For I can easily see that one's impressions are going to be varied and "subject to change without notice." Thank you.

When I got to New York I drew cash from the Chase National Bank and had it fix my credit here in France (Paris). It was a good thing I did so, for we were on our own resources from the time we hit England and it costs something to eat in these parts. Also, I will not get anything from U. S. until August 1st, so once again you have proved a life-saver for me. It is useless for me to try to thank you, Dad, for all you have done for me, for I can never find words adequate to express just what I feel. But you have just to say the word, Dad, and if it can be done by man I'll do it for you. Right now I feel you want me to do my bit to the best of my ability;

to be true to Becky, you folks and myself; and above all and what it really all means, to be worthy of the name of Britton and to be a worthy son of you.

Those things I will do, Dad, and when it is all over I want to come home to you, shake you hand and say "Dad, I did my durndest."

Ever,

THE NIGGER.

CHAPTER III

OLD ENGLAND VERSUS FRANCE

"OVER THERE," JULY 17, 1918.

DEAR PEOPLE ALL VIA BECKY:

AT LAST, after travelling steadily for four weeks to the day, we arrived at our destination somewhere in France, and not so far behind the lines that it is impossible to hear the big guns booming out their war cry. In the quiet of the evening the sound of them reminds one of the surf pounding on a beach a long way off; only here the constant vibration of the air accompanies the sound and the combination of the two makes the pulse beat a little quicker and one becomes impatient and longs for the time when that sound will be overhead, and right ahead a matter of a few hundred yards will be your objective—the Hun's trench. For it isn't going to be a big drive to Berlin but simply a matter of taking the trench just ahead, and then as soon as that is reached, setting your objective ahead a little bit more and going after it. Not unlike the game of life, is it, for we establish an ideal and as soon as it is obtained we immediately set our eyes on another a little closer to the ultimate goal and work toward it. I don't mean to be a penny philosopher, but I couldn't help making the comparison as it was so obvious to me.

We landed in England a week ago today and immediately entrained and were whirled through the country on an all-day trip which I enjoyed more than any similar day's journey on the whole trip. The country is as neat and clean throughout as a new pin and all of the fields are marked by a little hedge instead



"MOTHER"

of the ugly, practical American barbed wire. All of the roads are well paved and lined with shade trees and box hedges through which you catch a glimpse of the quaint old houses built of brick with a brick thatched-roof barn in back. In the larger cities there are row after row of brick houses, all alike, with immaculate white curtains at every window, and flower pots strewn around promiscuously. There don't seem to be any squalid or dirty hovels such as are found in our American cities. In fact if I were asked what England reminded me of I would say, Ivory Soap, it is 99 44/100 per cent pure.

When we reached our destination, another seaport, we went into a rest camp for the night, embarking for France the next day at noon. Believe me that trip across the Channel was *hell*. We were on a small boat and the wind almost amounted to a gale so that the decks were awash most of the time. It was a hot sultry night, and all the ports being closed did not help any. There were no bunks, so about one hundred and fifty officers crowded into the dining saloon, which was the only available space on the boat for us, and lay down on the floor and completely covered it so that the few who straggled in later had to lie on the four foot by four foot tables, and one even climbed up and stretched out on the buffet. Of course some of the lads got sick and the only possible way to get out was to step on the men lying down. I was stepped on no less than eight times before I drifted into a state of coma—I can't call it sleep—and then I quit counting.

When we landed in France we went to a British rest camp, and there we stayed until we entrained Sunday for this place. While at the rest camp we ate at the E. F. C. (Expeditionary Forces Canteen) which is run by the W. A. A. C. (Woman's Auxiliary Army Corps),

and I want to say right here and now that they are doing perfectly wonderful work. They are enlisted for the duration of the war, wear uniforms which are O. D., a tunic like a Russian blouse with a red shoulder strap with W. A. A. C. on it in gold, a knee length—or rather about three inches below the knee—skirt, heavy knit woolen O. D. stockings, and tan oxfords. It is a good practical uniform, and most of them have their hair bobbed and wear a hat not unlike our campaign hat with the brim pinned up on the left side by the W. A. A. C. pin. They are doing every kind of work in the Army that it is possible for a woman to do, and no man in uniform is doing any kind of light work unless he is crippled.

The W.A.A.C.s run the officers' rest billets, drive staff cars and motor trucks, act as motorcycle messengers, work in the ordnance, commissary and supply warehouses, and you are eternally finding them in some out-of-the-way, unexpected place. They are kind and courteous, bright and smiling always, and they have the profound respect of the officers and men. With their uniforms they can go anywhere, any time, and be safer than they ever were before in all of their lives—safer than they were in their own homes in England. Hats off to the W.A.A.C.s, and may God bless them, for they will surely get their due reward in heaven.

While at the camp I had the opportunity of visiting a large seaport town of France, and, believe me, some filth. You people know how dirty Yokohama is—it can't hold a candle to any of these French towns which are the most disgusting places I have ever been in. For unsanitary customs that are vile and would make any American blush with shame, this country wins hands down. And the less said about the morals of the place

the better. Thank God I am married, for this is no place for a single man. The only comfort I have found here is the fact that you can buy a quart of beer for seventy-five centimes, or about fifteen cents. If I ever had any illusions about fighting for La Belle France they are gone; I am fighting for the sanctity of womanhood and the protection of my home, my wife and my kiddies.

We were two days and two nights on the train coming here, and on the trip we lived on bully beef and dry bread washed down with red wine. I wouldn't drink the water here on a bet in spite of my extra shots of triple typhoid. There were eight of us crowded into a compartment smaller than a compartment on a Pullman, and in there we sat and slept sitting up. If the trip had lasted another day I'm afraid there would have been murder, for we reached here short of sleep, temper and grub, and long of whiskers. So when we sat down to a real honest to God American lunch yesterday noon, with real *pie* and coffee, it certainly would have done your heart good to see us pile into it. A real bath and nap yesterday afternoon with a short walk to the village near here, then a big supper, a pipe and book for an hour and then the first real sleep—twelve hours of it—since leaving Camp Lewis; for we didn't sleep well on the train—we were too excited—nor on the boat, for we had to have all of our clothes on, and since landing in England we haven't seen a real bed; so you can imagine how good it felt to slip between clean sheets, use a pillow with a clean pillow slip and have soft stuff under you and clean, soft blankets over you.

The camp here is located upon a plateau, high and dry, and far enough away from any source of infection. And it is clean, as only an American camp can be. It certainly seems good to be able to get away from the

smell of a French town which, by the way, is *some* smell.

The French girls are well dressed; that is, they know how to dress so they make the most of their charms. But they are not clean, physically, mentally or morally, and have absolutely no false modesty of any kind so far as I can see. Give me the English girl, with her high complexion and the sensible skirt and shoes that allow her to swing along at a good fast walk. God knows they are not pretty, even with their wonderful complexions, but they are good, clean, wholesome, sound and sensible. I had rather an indifferent opinion of England before this trip, but I retract everything I ever said, and I am one grand little booster for that little island from now on. Of course we have not seen any of the better class French people, and I suppose they "are most remarkable, like you and I," but my impressions of those I have seen stand as written. They are only my private opinions, but if I were President or King of this country I'd sell a billion bonds and put sewers in every town, and I'd lock all the unmarried women up in a big cage and only let them out after a marriage ceremony had been performed through the bars.

The country is remarkably like the valleys of the coast range of California in appearance and climate; but let the comparison stop right there. Carry it no further or you will be incurring my serious hatred for circulating insidious propaganda. For the villages are vile, old and crummy, and smell like "Stinkum Turn," on the road to Redwood; I mean the fertilizing plant with the big pig sty next door. And the whole country simply swarms with kids whose sole knowledge of English is "penny," or "souvenir," and they certainly do pester you by keeping right by your heels. If you

give them a penny they take it in silence and are after you again.

Very nearly half of the women are wearing black with the veils flowing all over them. I do not like this custom at all. If a man dies in this fight for right and the freedom of his country he has simply done his bit, and even if one sorrows there is no need of advertising the fact; for black is a continual reminder to you and your friends of your bereavement. If it is a real sorrow you need nothing to remind you of it, and the sooner you forget the sorrow of it and remember only the glory of it, the happier will be the one who has gone. For, if he loved you he desired your happiness above all else. *Them's my sentiments.*

In England you were unable to get food without a ticket, and all sales were restricted; but for the things that you could get you were only charged a very nominal price, while here in France everything is ace high. So save your sugar, for that seems to be one of the scarcest things over here. We can get no candy of any sort except plain chocolate which is of poor quality, and very dear. But since we can get beer and pale ale in small quantities, the craving for sweets is not so intense. I never did like Bass's Ale, but I'm certainly taking it every chance I get now. Tobacco is cheap and plentiful, and, while in England we couldn't get any real cigarettes, here in France near the American posts you can get P. A. and Tuxedo, Camels and Durham as cheap, if not cheaper than in the States.

School starts Monday and until then I'm going to rest up and take it as easy as possible. Only having to wear our blouses and Sam Brown belts all the time, and the temperature about the same as Kenwood on the Fourth of July does not make for comfort. However, I

guess these warm woolens will come in handy a little later, as I understand it gets *some* cold here in winter.

Well, kind people all, adieu for this time, and I'll write again soon. My address, when you answer this, will be

Lieut. EMMET N. BRITTON,
Hdq. Co., 363d Infantry,
American Expeditionary Forces,
via New York.

Arthur sends his very best to you all, also Frank Postelwaithe. Lots of love to all of you,

MITT.

CHAPTER IV

IN FRANCE

LA BELLE FRANCE,
SUNDAY, JULY 28, 1918.

DEAR PEOPLE ALL—

SUNNY Belle France! And it has been cold and rainy for the past week, and in the middle of summer! God help us in January! The one bright spot is the radio reports of "Germans in full retreat on the Soissons-Chateau-Thierry-Reims sector with the French-American forces in hot pursuit." A cold gray day and down in the "Y" hut—I am in the library—some cheerful idiot has just finished playing *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and now is starting in with *Humoresque*. I leave it to any of you if that isn't a cheerful prelude to a letter you are writing to the home folks, and when all who are dear to you are eight thousand miles away! But, as the French say, "C'est la guerre," or words to that effect, whenever anything is not what it ought to be, or things go generally wrong. (The —— fool is now playing *Melody in F*. He is going to be possessed of a wrung neck if he isn't more careful.)

I believe the last time I wrote I was mildly (?) disgusted with French people and manners in general. I guess I am getting accustomed to the sights and smells for they don't bother me nearly as much as they did. The little village down the hill from here is under control of highly efficient American M. P.s who maintain a higher or greater cleanliness, both moral and physical, than the simple village people had ever before heard of, let alone seen. So —— is really not so bad as the large

towns, which, however, is not saying so very much for it. If the people here could ever see the possibilities of a clean town its own size, say St. Helena, they would think it heaven itself.

A little river runs through the center of the town and furnishes water for the town as well as a means of disposal of refuse. Between these two points is the washing place, and believe me, I'll never again kick at an American laundry. The French laundries at home are pretty swell affairs, but over here—O Lord!—all of your dirty clothes are put in a bag which is thrown into the river with a rock tied on it and the clothes allowed to soak all night. Early the next morning, after Madame has fortified herself with a loaf of bread and a jug of "vin ordinaire," she wades out mid-stream, chases the ducks off the laundry bag and hauls it all out on a big flat rock. Then comes the fun. A big wooden paddle, a little smaller than a row-boat oar, makes a mysterious appearance, and piece at a time your laundry is subjected to a thorough beating while Madame chatters away in voluble French, discussing the village gossip with another old dame on the opposite bank. The dirtiest pieces of clothing, as with the chatter, are left until last. By then Madame has a good sweat worked up and is real angry at someone—and oh, how she lays on the paddle! In the meanwhile her fourteen children are playing all around her, and every once in a while when Jacques gets hold of the duck tail or something else she lets drive at him with the paddle, probably knocking him into the water and telling him to stay in a while and get his clothes clean. If the collar of a shirt is real dirty the rock is used as a scrubbing board until the dirt comes off or the fabric wears through. Then Madame lays all the clothes on her bed, lies on them and takes a nap after

her strenuous exertions, and folding them up after her nap sends them back to you and charges you two prices for washing and ironing. If I have to stay here more than a year and a half I'll be wiring for a whole new outfit, for I can easily see its finish with these "rough dry French laundries."

Last night being Saturday night, Frank Postlewaithe, Art Erb and I wandered down to the village and had a wild carousal, drinking a quart of beer apiece and staggering home under the load. It was the first we had had for a week, for we have been so blamed busy studying we have not had the time to go even for a five minutes' walk to get the stuff. It is certainly virulent stuff, so much so that a drink of Bevo would taste like beer alongside of it, and Budweiser would seem like waterfront whiskey.

A scene at the Post Office:

ANXIOUS EMMY—"Got any mail for Lieut. Britton?"

P. O. ORDERLY—"Nope—how long have you been here?"

ANXIOUS EMMY—"About two weeks."

P. O. ORDERLY—"What are you doing? Trying to kid me?"

ANXIOUS EMMY—(Indignantly) "Certainly not."

P. O. ORDERLY—"You won't get any mail until you rejoin your outfit, three weeks from now."

A. E. rushes madly to the Y. M. C. A. and tries to drown his sorrows in a cup of chocolate, but the cheerful idiot is playing Traumeri and A. E. rushes madly out into the storm and tries to play King Lear. A gas attack is launched, and A. E. rushes hastily to his barracks one jump ahead of the gas wave, remembering the sign in the gas-house, "In a gas attack there are two kinds of men, the quick and the dead; don't be a dead one." "It's all right to cook with gas, but who in hell wants to croak with it?"

The work at school is going fine and we are getting a

lot of practical data that we could not get elsewhere and which, after all, is the only stuff that helps when you are up in front and pull off a show. And right here and now I want to say that the bunch of officers here from the Signal Corps, with one or two exceptions, could go to Ward D of the Eldridge Feeble Minded Home, and in forty minutes the doctor would have them signed up for life as incurables. If these men are representative samples of the rest of that branch may God have mercy on the lines of communication. I don't see how they are kept up as well as they are. It is probably due to the Infantry men who are doing their work for them. Pardon the bilious attack, but I have just had to move into a barracks with a lot of them, and it is just like pitching your tent in a monkey cage. After five minutes I told them all to go to h—l and walked out hearing one of them say, "He must be one of those rough persons from that Western camp." I turned around and told him he was "—— right." Since then three other doughboys from our division have joined me in misery and we are down in one corner, and the rest of the barracks have declared an armistice, but will have nothing to do with us—which just suits us, as they are all from the Eastern States and don't talk our talk. If one of those boys ever stood on the corner of Market and Powell some one would either kiss it or kill it.

Well, people, it isn't such a bad little war, only I'd give a lot for the magic carpet so I could spend my week-ends with you all, for Sunday is one lonesome little day and since you write letters which have to go so far it makes it all the more so. So it's love and kisses all around to the ladies, and a good hand shake to all the he members, and "bon voyage" to the letter.

Ever and always—Just—MITT.

CHAPTER V

REFLECTIONS

SUNDAY, AUGUST 8, 1918.

DEAR DAD AND MOTHER MINE—

JUST a wee note with no news in it to tell you both I am warm, dry, and in good health, and as happy as could be expected under existing circumstances. Any news is in a general letter sent to Becky to be forwarded around the circuit. I feel, though, that there should be just a personal touch in our letters that can't be put into a general letter.

Somehow it always seems as though I should be thanking you two for something; either for some worldly goods you have given me, or for some fine thing done for me or mine, some act of love and kindness that means much to me. Right now I want to thank you two for having brought me into the world, for having brought me up to respect womanhood, to loathe a coward, and to believe myself as good as any man but no better than my poorer neighbor. I have lived a glorious life—thanks to you—and have had a wonderfully happy time of it, and I have been loved by a wonderful girl who has made me happier than I ever believed it possible to be, and I have been blessed with two bright, healthy and perfect kiddies. All of this is due to you two. You have brought up a big family and they have all deserted you, married, and are bringing up, or trying to bring up, families of their own. If I am the first to thank you for bringing me into the world and raising me the others should be ashamed; if I am the last, I am sorry, for while I have often thought it I never could seem to get around to say it.

Now I want to say something. If I come back after this fuss is over the same as I am now in body and mind I am not going back to the farm, but I'm going to jump into the game of business to either do or be done. If I don't make good if won't be because I have not tried. If I come back banged up a bit then I will retire to some sheltered spot and try to raise better prunes than my neighbor and run for president of the local farmers' association. My good wife will give me her entire support whichever way it goes, and God knows I need her support, more, perhaps, than she realizes.

Father and mother of mine, your youngest son is trying to do his duty as he sees it, though it isn't the easiest thing in the world to do, for his heart is there in the States; but come what may I want both of you to know that for the life you have given me I will always thank you.

Only

THE KID.

CHAPTER VI

SUNDAY MORNINGS

SUNDAY, AUGUST 8, 1918.

DEAR KIND PEOPLE ALL:

A GAIN the blessed Sabbath hath rolled around, bringing with it its usual gloomy, rainy weather. I sure feel I am on the other side of the world from the States all right, for over there it may rain and storm all week but will clear up for Sunday so all hands can doll up and troop to church (and believe me, I'd sure like to see such a procession again) while over here the very opposite holds true. The one day we have any time to think of home folks at any great length, the sky has to be overcast and the footing perilous, and consequently our thoughts are overcast, and the footing is like that on the Via Dolorosa. I'd like to see a Sunday such as we have at home in May once more, and probably I'd be so darn homesick that I would welcome these rainy ones, since they give us a chance to grouse and so forget part of our real trouble.

Just a word about the work here, and then we will consider it tabooed. We had our first examination Monday, and your little son and kid brother pulled down one hundred, and on a note book handed in at the same time ninety-five. Tomorrow comes the second exam and we will be half way through the course, but I am not nearly as confident as I was before. However, we will do our darndest and let it go at that.

Yesterday during buzzer practice the sergeant was sending stuff out of the newspaper, as is his custom, and sent the word "California," which caused little Emy to

get so darned excited that he missed the rest of the sentence, and forgot discipline and dignity to such an extent that he gave a wild cheer in which he was joined by his own two sergeants, O'Brien and Trusty. Being properly repulsed, we subsided, but exchanged a few grins, for we felt that we had upheld the reputation of the West, as we are considered barbarians.

Last night Little Playmate (Art Erb), Sunshine (Frank Postlethwaithe) and I again gathered ourselves together in a quiet little inn in the village, and spent a few hours in profitable discussion, touching lightly upon the proper way to conduct this war so as to bring it to a speedy end. As a result we had to pay Madame a few extra francs as the red and white table cover was well marked up with diagrams drawn with burnt matches. I'm sure if General John knew we were in the army each of us would hold a staff position as orderly or hostler or some other high office. We finally agreed though, that rather than have any dissension we would do as we were told, and if we weren't home by a year from Christmas we could blame somebody else.

I very nearly bought a couple of postal cards down in the village last night for Jack, but I was afraid that they wouldn't get by the censor—he would take them for his own personal use, but fear not, Jawn—I'll bring back a couple in the tray of my trunk. I have wanted to buy some little thing for each of you, but the village is so small that there is nothing in it very much worth while, but when we move nearer to one of the large cities I will see if I can't find something that is distinctly French.

Down at the "Y" they are having morning services and are singing some of the old favorite hymns. It has brought to my mind one Sunday morning when I was

going to training camp and Dad and Becky and I had a little song fest all our own in the big living-room at Redwood. I can see the big room now just as it was then with the piano in the northeast corner and a fire snapping away in the fire place, with the colored supplements of the Chronicle and Examiner scattered on that overstuffed davenport. They don't have funny papers over here, and I guess they think that they are relics of a barbaric age.

The more I see of this country the better American I become, and from now on I am a confirmed disciple of the "See America First" doctrine, although I will say that England can show us a few things when it comes to neatness. When we are as old as England, which reminds me of one of the old maiden ladies of the Mid-Victorian period with a white cap on her head and white collar and cuffs, we will probably be just as neat, though in a more informal way.

Think of me once in a while, people, for it gets pretty lonesome being here all alone, and it's kind of nice to feel that the people at home are giving you a good thought once or twice a day. So here's a cheerio and good luck to all.

THE KID.

CHAPTER VII

ANTICIPATION

A SUNNY SUNDAY IN FRANCE !!!
FRANCE, AUGUST 20, 1918.

HELLO PEOPLE:

HERE I have been crabbing my poor fool head off every letter and grouching about the bum Sundays in France. We are now at the close of as perfect a day as California ever produced. But (to continue to grouse) I wrote up notes all day, and the poor old mit of Mitt is all gnarled and cramped. (Of course I wrote Becky.)

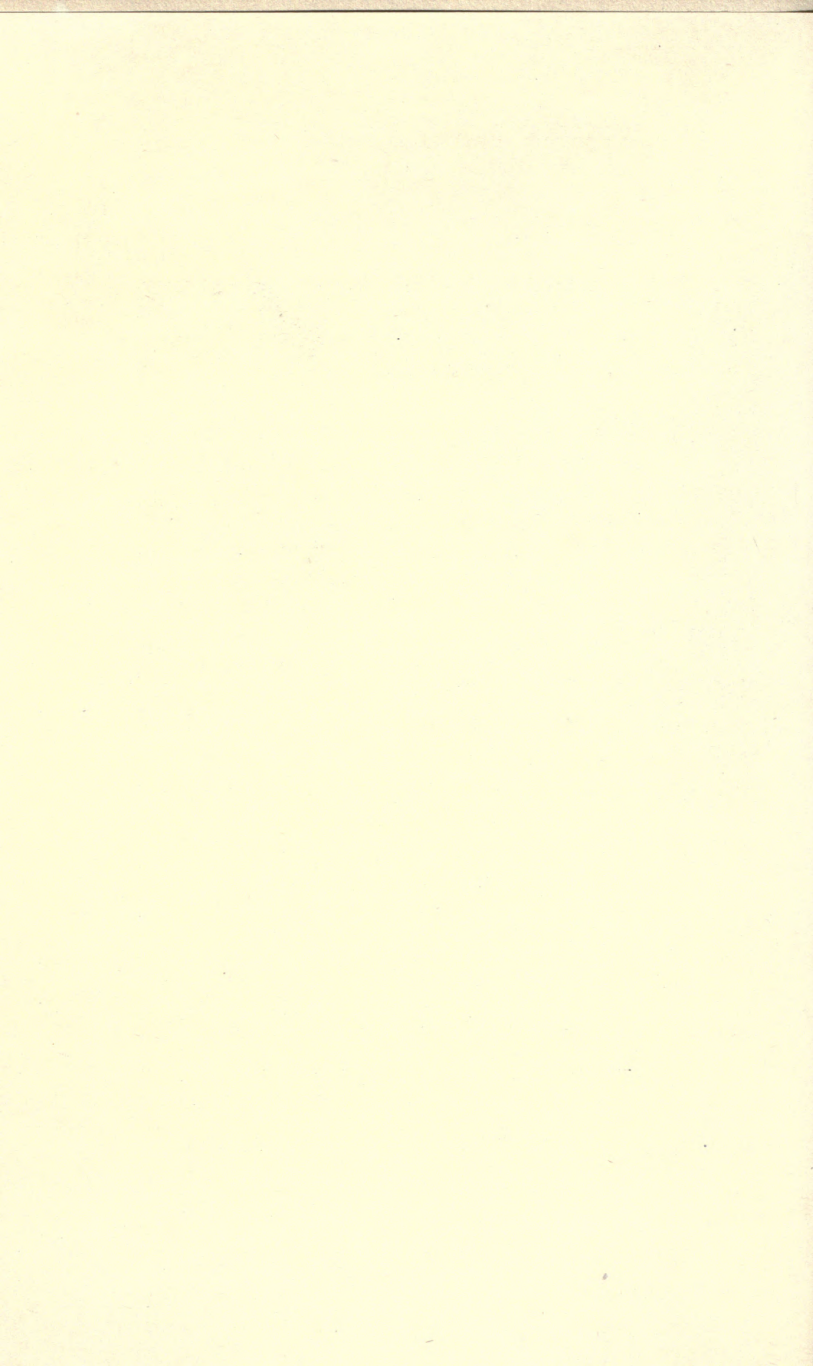
One week more of this institution and I'll be turned loose upon the outfit again, and it is going to seem darn good to see all the boys again. Almost like a touch of home. Fell down in the exam this week and only pulled down ninety-eight. I'll try to do better tomorrow, but as I have to take part in a track meet tomorrow morning before the exam I'm afraid I won't be in very good shape. Here's hoping, though. After all this isn't such a bad little war, for if you all were closer you couldn't have filet mignon unless you cut it out of a can of bully beef and once a week you have a feast, sweet potatoes fresh from the can. Lots of eggs, though, so you needn't draw any picture of me starving to death with a three-egg omelet selling for one franc fifty, in case the tummie rebels at bully. The only thing that bothers me is that you people eat corned beef when you can get veal, lamb and mutton. Last night I dreamed of a big T bone steak smothered in onions with lots of French fried potatoes on the side. So everyone of you, when you eat a steak after this, think of me the first bite or two, and if you



EMMET N. BRITTON, JR.

PATRICIA ALICE BRITTON

BECKY BRITTON



get some spaghetti *financiere*—oh, don't mind me—I had a rotten dinner tonight.

It is a big he-night tonight, and I'd sure love to be "Somewhere in California" in a machine with my lady fair, headed toward you all for a big re-union feed. (There I go talking about food again—don't mind. I'll buy a bar of "chocolat au lait" at the "Y" and forget it.)

Nothing of interest happened on the front today. But there will be "hell poppin" this week, for we have a couple of big maneuvers on, to say nothing of final exams and packing up.

Calamity—officers' baggage will be limited to fifty pounds besides what he carries. From now on I resemble the patient little long eared canary of the southwestern plains.

This is a helluva letter—I'm too nervous—possibly an air raid coming tonight. If so I'll d——n Fritz good and proper, as I need the rest.

Love to all of you—and forgive

IGNATZ—THE NUT.

Alias MITT.

CHAPTER VIII

READY FOR THE FRAY

AUGUST 10, 1918.

DEAR DAD AND MOTHER MINE—

JUST a note to tell you all is O. K. I am back with my outfit after finishing school with a final average of ninety-six-ninety-nine in my exams.

Seems good to be back with all the lads again, though the whole regiment is scattered throughout six villages. We are working night and day, and the front lines seem like a vacation when we get there.

Billeted in a French home and have a hard time making my wants known, but I'm getting to be a darn good actor though my French vocabulary has not increased very much.

Fine old family. I have the bridal suite, and sleep in a bed that is six feet from the floor and has a red canopy over it. Feel like Cleopatra or Mary, Queen of Scots, when I vault into bed.

Weather hashy, a little of everything. No mail yet; I guess it's trailing all over France trying to catch up with me, for, believe me, I have done some travelling.

Have no idea when we will move up into the front row or orchestra seats. Wouldn't tell you if I did know (or could tell you) for I wouldn't want you to get excited in case the boat carrying my following letter should be sunk.

'Tis late at night, and as I have three men and a small boy's work to do tomorrow I'll say "Bon soir, old dears," "cheerio," "carry on," and all the rest of that bally rot.

Anyway, people, they can't hurt the Irish, so God
bless you both and drop a line occasionally to—

THE KID.

CHAPTER IX

PREPAREDNESS

IN THE FIELD,
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1918.

DEAR PEOPLE:

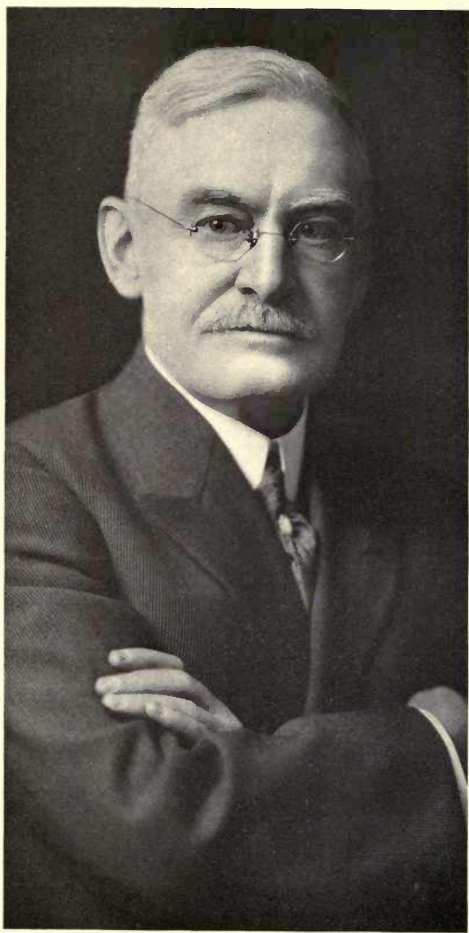
HERE we are on the go far from our comfortable billets and roughing it in the wilds of France. Where we are going no one knows, but we can all hazard one wild guess.

At present I am lying on my tummie in a puppie tent, trying to keep up the old pep, while outside old Boreas himself is tearing around sprinkling aqua pura all around. So far sunny Francy has done little but weep, possibly for her own deplorable condition.

We have been salvaging equipment every step, and each time we move on our packs grow lighter and our bedding rolls smaller. I left the States with about four hundred dollars' worth of equipment—a dollar a pound—while now I am down to my bedding roll, and besides the clothes I have on all I have with me in the line of clothing is a change of underwear and three pair of sox. So little by little and bit by bit we drop bundles along the line. I expect when I get into the first action to be clothed in a pair of B. V. D. pants, a bayonet in one hand and a telephone and roll of wire in the other. "On to Berlin."

So far I have travelled across France three times, and I hope that the next time I head back toward the Channel it will be toward a port of embarkation for the U. S.

We all feel confident that there will be no let up in the Allied drives even through the winter, and when the



"DAD"

time comes for Fritz's usual spring drive he will be willing to listen to our peace terms instead of making up some damphule ones of his own.

Dad, your letters are wonders, and it sure does the Kid a lot of good to get them, for they boost up the morale about twenty points above par. If every man in the army could receive such letters we would be in Berlin in a month. I have received your letters number one, number two, number three, and number five. Number four seems to have joined up with the Lusitania. Letters one, two and three having been salvaged I cannot answer them properly, but turning to the first of the pencil plied epistles—number five—I perceive the word wasp being used in connection with one Charlie Conlisk; reminds me—I have often wondered why the royal arms of France and of Napoleon had golden bees on them, and even on the canopies of the beds and the upholstering of the furniture. Now I know. There are more wasps here than there are square inches in the whole State of California. The sons-of-guns are tame and we simply have to bat and brush them aside like one would flies when trying to eat a piece of bread and molasses in a low-down livery stable.

On the top of page two you spoke of repetition and drew in a vamp—which leads me to say that I have yet to see some real French babies. I have read a lot about these French vamps on music, on shoes and on the boulevards, but I repeat that someone's tastes were very, very poor. I have seen some of the so called beauties, but they remind me of a broken down, spavined bunch of third rate chorus girls that are with a burlesque show hitting the very small valley towns, such as Oroville, Red Bluff and Colfax.

I envy you your trip to the Bohemian Grove, and

I'd like to try that late bed going, late rising bar sinister habit for about a brace of days. To get up in the morning and take a bath and eat some eggs and drink some *coffee* would be my idea of a small sized piece of heaven. And to be able to see you all would make it a darn sized bigger chunk of heaven. Of course you realize my Becketts and kiddies are in on that too.

Just now we are all hidden in a big forest of pines and the sound of the wind heaving sighs through their tops makes me some home-sick for the old Sierras.

I think we are on the eve of a big battle (St. Mihiel) which will probably be history when you receive this, but, Dad and Mother mine, I want you to know that any of the fine things you have said about me I consider as compliments to you both, for all I am, hope, pray for and hold dear is due to you. If in any small way I am to be complimented, you started me, so take the consequences.

Vast gobs of love to you— From

TUBBY.

CHAPTER X

THE DAYS BEFORE

"SOMEWHERE,"
SEPTEMBER 15, 1918.

DEAR PEOPLE ALL—

SINCE the army has abolished Sundays I don't know just when I wrote to you last, but I imagine it was some time ago. We keep no count of the days, as most of our work is now done at nights.

I believe the last time I wrote we were camped in a small wood hiding ourselves, and being continually rained on. I believe Cherubim and Seraphim must have occupied the sector of heavens directly above us, and they "continually did cry." (Apologies to the author Diddy, Dump and Tot.) Try to imagine the scene. A regiment of infantry (some three thousand men) camped in a sparse wood which covered about twenty acres, all in pup tents. A cold wind driving in from the south-west, throwing the wind in sheets against the meagre shelter of the men. Dusk, that hour of the day when one's vitality is lowest and the most appealing thing in the world is a hot meal and a warm dry bed. The scene is laid; picture it if you can. Suddenly a motorcycle courier comes along the road at forty miles an hour and jumps off opposite the C. O.'s tent. Then officers call, the order of march is published, then strike tents. To really understand the difficulties of striking tents in the rain and darkness perhaps I had better do a little explaining. Each man carries one-half of a shelter tent, one pole and five pins. This shelter half is a piece of canvas six feet by four feet, and forms the outside of the roll a man carries. To make up a roll the shelter half is

spread on the ground, the one blanket is laid on it and inside of the blanket are placed the poles and pins, the one suit of underwear, and three pairs of sox, which make up all of a man's outfit with the exception of the toilet articles which include one comb, one tooth brush, one piece of soap, one razor and one shaving brush. Add to that one can of bully beef and eight pieces of hard-tack and you have the contents of a man's pack.

Now, a piece of canvas is a darn hard thing to handle when it is windy, so on a rainy day when there is a wind it is no fun making up a roll, for as soon as you strike tents all of your stuff starts to get wet and your shelter half will not lie flat. But strike tents we did, then the assemble, "forward march," and in twenty minutes the column of men over a mile and a half long followed by the wagon trains were splashing along the dark muddy road, the silence unbroken save for the clump, clump of the hob-nailed boots. And so on through all the long dark wet night. We passed through towns and villages, cities and countryside, over rivers and across railroad tracks, but pushing relentlessly on. When the light in the east was just becoming apparent and one could begin to make out the figures of the men in front of you and they began to assume definite form instead of darker blotches in a dark surrounding element we pulled into a fair sized town, once prosperous, but now partly in ruins. The men were stowed away into barns and lofts full of soft sweet-smelling hay, to hide away and sleep off the effect of the night's work as only a tired soldier can sleep, forgetful of rats, spiders and even "cooties," though in that respect we have so far been very lucky.

Our stay in that town was not a long one, for the next afternoon out of a clear sky we picked up and left

under more advantageous conditions. After a walk of a few miles we hopped into motor lorries and started. The booming of the big guns was very close, and their regular flashes reminded me of the old flashlight on Alcatraz Island. But as the trucks, and there were over seven hundred and fifty of them in one string, went on, the rumble died down, and at dawn we landed in another town *several* miles away from where we started.

And here we are.

Today was a regular letter orgy, as I received two letters from Becky, number four from Dad from Bohemia, number two from Ed, number four from Boonie, number two from Sid, one from my "god-mother" in New York, and one from Paul Smith. So you can just picture me revelling in mail.

Gosh, how good it does seem to get mail from home. A perfectly wonderful feeling, and you sure are one hundred per cent more use to Uncle Sam after getting a batch of mail than you were before. I wish I could answer all your letters one by one as they deserve, but there simply is not time. So all of you *please* keep on writing and when you read those family letters just imagine the envelope was addressed to *you*. I'd love to keep on writing every day, but just now it can't be did. Some day, however, I'll have the time, and each of you will get a real long letter from me.

No fighting for us yet, but we are "rearing to go," and when we do you will know of it. God bless you all, and believe me, the Kid thinks of all of you and your kindnesses to him and his every day.

I am still—just

THE KID.

CHAPTER XI

ANTICIPATIONS

IN A DUGOUT
SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE,
SEPTEMBER 23, 1918.

DEAR DAD AND PEOPLE ALL—

NOT being a systematic cuss like unto thee, I realize that long since I have ceased numbering my letters, but in this hurly-burly life we lead system is impossible. Having covered a greater part of France via shanks' mare and the Hob-Nail Route we have lost everything except our gas masks, tin hats, shooting paraphernalia, smiles and hate of the Hun, so diaries and like impedimenta are gracing some gutter of France. So please forgive.

You have asked me for my opinion of the Y. M. C. A., Salvation Army, K. of C. and Red Cross and the work they are doing over here. I will take them up in that order for that would be the way I would rank them, according to what I have seen so far. Remember, please, that in this I have not had a chance to scout around, but have had to take things as they come.

The Y. M. C. A. is doing great work. In all of the permanent camps they have huts in which there is a good canteen where men may purchase certain luxuries at rock-bottom prices; there also the men can find heat, magazines and books, and about four times a week either movies or entertainment. When an outfit moves into the field one of the secretaries goes along and about once a week gets in a supply of cigars, cigarettes, cookies and goodies which he distributes pro rata among the men and officers. Also they have an ideal way of send-

ing money home for the boys, which is like the Coast Artillery, "safe and sound."

The Salvation Army also has huts in the principal camps where the lassies keep up the boys' morals with apple pies, doughnuts, coffee and prayer meetings, to say nothing of the delight of speaking English to a "female of the species."

Of the K. of C. work I have seen little except the distribution of paper and envelopes, which work is also done by the Red Cross, Y. M. C. A. and Salvation Army.

The Red Cross has attached to each division a working force which is designed to take care of the men's worries and troubles at home, but I am afraid that it is not advertised enough, for I only found out about it the other day myself, and I have been advising my men to use it ever since, which I hope they are doing.

You tell me that as a fighter I must take off my hat to the brave fighters of France. Yes, Dad, you are right—and I do—*only*, if they had spent as much time fighting on the front on which we are now located as they have in building some of these swell dug-outs (one of which I am now in) perhaps this part of the line would be several miles nearer the German border. When you see dug-outs made of pressed brick with feather beds, electric lights, open fireplaces and hot-water shower baths in them it is a little too much for the impatient Yankees. These people are war-worn and weary and don't want to fight any more than they can help, while we are all anxious to get in and get it over with so we can get back home. I suppose if we had been slogging along in this misery for four years we would be fed up on it too. But they are blamed good fighters, and I hand it to them. In looking over this last paragraph I

don't know that it would pass the censor, but I'm going to take a chance. Poor old Fritz is still more tired, and most of the prisoners we see now are old gray-beards and mere lads. The flower of the German army has been cut down and Fritz certainly sees the handwriting on the wall.

It was a pitiful thing the other night when we passed through what was once one of the fairest towns in France and a place famous in history and fiction, to see the desolation wrought by the Hun. There was not a single building left and the ruins reminded me of San Francisco about the 22d of April, 1906. To add to the scene there was a full moon rising through the ruins of a famous castle while the black clouds scudding across the face of it made the whole thing more ghastly. Fritz did his bit by sending over a few H. E. shells while we were marching, but so perfect was our discipline that not a man lost the step even when they fell in too close for comfort. Then up we came through this famous old forest, which was a favorite hunting ground of the old French monarchs, and finally found ourselves really and truly "in it." It was a great moment, but I did not get the thrill out of it that I expected when I took my first good look at "No Man's Land." However, I fully expect to get one good big thrill out of our first attack, whenever that takes place.

As for sending me stuff, it takes an order signed by a colonel or better to get a package sent. However, a large envelope will get by as first class mail and if you can figure out anything that can come that way, why send it along, as it will be welcome. You all have been dandy about writing, and letters are certainly a god-send over here. Your letters number six and number seven on hand, and letters and enclosures thoroughly en-

joyed. Two dandy letters from Mother and one from Boone with the pictures in it of her kidlets. A letter from Becky with pictures of my babes made one big lump in my throat, *believe me*.

Well, peoples, must go out on a tour of inspection and instruction and I hope that when the next chance of letter-writing comes around I'll be able to write a more interesting letter and tell of some front line experiences. Until then good luck and keep up the good work.

With loads of love to all—just

MITT.

CHAPTER XII

AFTER THE BATTLE OF ARGONNE

OCTOBER 9, 1918.
SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE,
IN A BASE HOSPITAL.

DEAR OLD DAD—

NOW don't get excited, old timer, on account of the heading, for externally I am just as I was when you last saw me. No new vents in my system due to Prussian frightfulness, but merely a little carelessness on my part. When Fritz saw us coming, and, believe me, *we were coming!* he got scared and threw all his hand grenades away so he could run faster, and some of them landed in some little creek from which I had to drink and I must have swallowed one whole. The doctor called it dysentery but I don't think he was considering the cause, merely the effect produced. Anyway, I am about O. K. again, though pretty weak in the knees, and ready to go back into it again and have another whirl at Fritz.

We went over the top the morning of September 26th, in a dense fog into a perfect jungle which was full of machine guns and snipers. We played tag with them until we got tired of it and got mad enough to get started and then we *went*. The lads on either side couldn't keep up, and after three days of pushing forward we had to hold the ground we had gained and wait with both flanks exposed for them to catch up. They never did make it and fresh divisions had to be put in to do it. So, you see, our Western lads are some fighters. After nine days of fighting we were relieved, as we were pretty well battered up by the artillery fire that was poured in from our flanks. They dragged me out of the fight the day

we were relieved, so I got all of the same punishment that the outfit did, and of that I'm mighty glad or I would have felt like a slacker.

I didn't pull off any of the hero stuff nor have I heard my name mentioned for a D. S. C. Like the rest of the lads in the outfit, I did all I could to maintain the reputation of the American army and make as many Boches sorry that they sank the *Lusitania* as I could. I am not boasting, Dad, when I say that I did not experience any actual physical fear, though I had the distinct honor of having several Boches sniping at me with machine guns at one time while I was splicing a wire. They are rotten shots, *if* they were trying to hit me. And one son-of-a-gun even went so far as to chase me across an open field by sniping at me with a 77, which corresponds to our three-inch field piece. He was a real nasty customer and I'd like to meet him again under more favorable circumstances—for me.

Sherman was dead right, only he didn't go far enough. I guess the censor wouldn't let him. While you are in the fight you can stand unspeakable hardships and never kick. Your whole finer self is obliterated and you become only a darn good hunter. Nothing else matters. The excitement of it all is like a big game, you take big chances to attain the ultimate success and don't count the cost. But the real hell is when the heat of battle goes out of your head and you begin to think. It is like a wound, it don't hurt much at the time—but later. But we all have to become penny philosophers and make the best of it.

By the papers today Billy of Potsdam is bleating for an armistice. Well, he won't get it yet and he will bleat a damn site louder before we get through kicking him in the ribs. The damn old four-flusher wants to cash in his

chips while he is ahead of the game. We will have to show him that this game has no time limit and he can't quit until he goes broke or breaks everyone else in the game.

This is your birthday, Dad, and I haven't any of this world's goods to give you except a whole lot of good wishes and the hope that you will be able to do as much good to the old U. S. in the coming year as you have in the past twelve months. Such I know is your wish. I am enclosing a couple of coins that one of my Boche friends pressed on me, and maybe you can buy a thrift stamp for yourself with them and call it my present to you.

Best of luck, best of fathers, and my love, you and Mother and all of the minute ramifications of our whole tree, branch and root.

THE KID.

CHAPTER XIII

FRANCE, OCTOBER 11, 1918.

DEAREST BOONIE GIRL:

I RECEIVED your letter, which I am sending back to you, on the firing line, in the middle of our first fight. I was lying in a shell hole under a heavy artillery and machine gun fire when our Chaplain (a good Catholic priest by the name of Jerry Galvin) who had been to the rear with some wounded, sought shelter in the same hole and produced your letter from his pocket. Being a good friend of mine he had seen the letter in the post-office we had left and had stuck it in his pocket and brought it along. The fire slackened and he left me, to work his way over to a bit of woods.

While I was reading your letter one of my men was badly wounded and I had to stop reading it to bind up his wound (see the back of your letter for evidences). A sniper had shot him through the shoulder and the bullet had lodged in his chest (he is O. K. now and is recovering rapidly). I stuffed your letter into my pocket, sans envelope, and started out for the sniper. Enclosed please find one of his shoulder straps.

This is the story of the shoulder strap, and I am merely sending back the letter with it as I figure the two should make a good souvenir of the war for you to keep and will probably be of some interest to your kiddies.

Love to you and Eddie, who will probably be interested in the part played by Jerry Galvin, who proved himself *some man* in our first fight.

Just,

MITT.

CHAPTER XIV

A SOLDIER'S DREAM

Excerpt from letter of Lieutenant Emmet N. Britton to Mrs. E. N. Britton, October 14, 1918, Base Hospital No. 42. Received November 10, 1918.

AND, then, how many times I have gone over the morning work on the ranch; get up and plug down into the kitchen, make the fire and put the coffee on, and while you were getting breakfast, out into the stable and feed the horses, at least three of them, one good work team and one driving mare for the kiddies to use to drive to school; milk the cow and set the big pans down in the cool cellar so the cream will rise. We will have a Jersey cow; they do not give very much milk but what they give is so rich. And we will have a dog, a big fellow to keep the kiddies company, and he will be one of those sleepy pups who will let the kiddies crawl all over him. Then, before I come into breakfast I'll have to feed the chickens—I haven't decided just yet whether they will be White Leghorns or Buff Cochins. Then into breakfast, set in a sunny corner of the kitchen, on a table with a blue and white cloth and the silver shining and sparkling in the early morning sun. For breakfast we will have some blackberries off our own vines, picked the evening before and soaked in sugar over night, with vast gobs of thick lumpy cream over them. Then a big platter of rolled oats, piping hot with more cream and powdered sugar, the whole to be finished off with about three sour milk hot cakes with just lots of butter of our own making spread over them.

Then, if it is springtime, put in the morning pruning or harrowing; if summer, making braces for the heavy

laden branches, or inspecting for blight, or spraying; if fall, to superintend the picking, drying and packing, and, in the winter, repairing trays and packing boxes, putting some new teeth in the harrow.

Then lunch—look over the San Francisco Examiner—we see where the Boston Symphony Orchestra is in town—we decide to hear it. Throw a few things into a suitcase, arrange for Mrs. X. to stay with the kiddies and honk-honk to catch the 1:30 from Marysville to connect up with local from Sacramento, to land us in the city at 6:30. Dinner at Tait's, phone home to see how the kiddies are, then to the Cort to enjoy the Symphony. Stay at the Manx, see the folks in the morning and put in the rest of the morning shopping. A couple of toys for the kiddies, some new "undies" for you, a Hoosier kitchen cabinet, a pair of boots for me, early lunch at Techau Tavern with Boon, and then a movie until 3:00, when we run for the Ferry and back we go up the valley, arriving home for dinner. After dinner the kiddies have to see what we have brought them—much pretending on our part that we plumb forgot them—the excited investigation of the suitcase by the little pirates and their joyous squeals at discovering their plunder. Finally we get them to bed and sit in front of the fireplace, try out on the Victrola the pieces we bought that we had heard the night before. Then to bed, to sleep a little late the next morning on account of our strenuous day the day before and because Earl and Mila are coming up for the week-end and are to arrive that evening. Quite a bit of fussing around that day with me trying to help you and managing to get in the way a whole lot until you send me into town for some necessary provisions we are short of. So I hitch up Betty, gather in the kidlets, set them on the bottom of the buggy and away we go. Back in

time to dress up a bit, bathe, and you insist on my *shaving* and cutting the lawn before the Parrishes arrive. Somehow the lawn don't get cut and we have a mad rush in the flivver to meet the train. We get there fine and dandy, just in time to meet them, still looking bride and gloomy. Earl's hand-clasp is firm and you don't notice his index finger being gone, while the limp in his right leg is ever so slight.

Out to the ranch we go on three cylinders, Earl kidding me about the price of prunes while you and Mila are furiously talking about the wonders of married life. Then supper, but Earl and I are about inspecting the place and we get just a wee bit of a scolding because the fruit cocktail has gotten warm on the table. But a good kiss and an apology make it all O. K., and we sit down at the table, Earl kidding Buster about having a case on the little tow-headed Swede girl who lives down the road a bit. Then after dishes have been done we sit around singing and playing the phonograph, discussing the latest play and novel, talking over good old Tacoma days, when we fought the battle of Camp Lewis and the siege of the Hostess House. Finally sleepy time, and off we pile to clean white sheets and lie awake a little while in each other's arms on the sleeping porch, glorying in the quiet of the moon-lit night and giving thanks to God for His goodness and the greatness of our love. Then being awakened to find the sun shining brightly and Earl up and dressed and out in the garden singing "Hark, Hark, the Lark." Breakfast eaten slowly and then the wild scramble to get ready for church, for we are singing in a vested choir in Marysville and bring Earl and Mila along to help out. Then a long, round-about drive home and Mrs. Y. has the dinner ready and the table set. So it's all hands to work and then so full

we can hardly waddle we get out and bask in the sun, lying on the lawn in perfect animal comfort. While there we persuade Parry that it will be O. K. if he catches the six-thirty next morning and gets to S. F. by eleven. So we put in a good chummy Sunday evening chatting, playing, singing, playing with the kiddies before we put them in their beds out on the porch.

And so ends a week and a new one begins for us as full of promise of happiness as the one past. Two evenings of the week will be spent in study, one of them at least on our professions, yours—the most glorious in the world—that of a wife and mother, while I try to keep up with my new occupation of a professional agriculturist by taking an extension course from the University and conferences and lectures from the Farm at Davis. The other night we can spend together reading poetry or some good book by an authority dealing with some of the big questions of the day or by a healthy discussion aided by the last Literary Digest.

Such have been my dreams, sweet girl of mine, and I have even gone further—pictured you having a cold, my not letting you get up, and oh, sweetheart, the joy it brought me to get up and get your breakfast and try and fix up a dainty tray.

MITT.

CHAPTER XV

RECOVERY

OCTOBER 21, 1918.

DEAR DAD AND PEOPLE ALL—

A T present I am at a replacement battalion waiting to be sent back to the outfit, and it's anxious I am to rejoin them, principally to get some mail from you all which should be waiting there for me. I hope the mail clerk has kept it and not forwarded it all over the country trying to catch me.

I lost most of my worldly goods in this last drive and as I returned here from the hospital via Paris I was able to draw on that money you had so royally placed there at my disposal. A godsend it certainly was, for I was not only down and out, but ragged and bare. All is fine now, though, and I'll give you all the details in my next letter.

This is just a wee bit of a note to tell you all I'm O. K. and thinking of you. Mother mine, I'm fine and dandy, and don't worry about my being cold this winter. I'll make out all right.

Just lots of love to all of you.

MITT.

CHAPTER XVI

MEMORIES

FRANCE, OCTOBER 29, 1918.

THE bright autumn sunshine, cool in the shade; a quaint street in an old French town, winding down the hill, losing itself in a sharp turn at the bottom. An old French woman cleaning a pair of wooden shoes at an open window, a detachment of American troops going back to the front, their feet, iron-shod, make the cobbles ring. The cat on the red tile roof stirs sleepily. The footsteps die away, the old lady closes the wooden shutter, the cat stretches into sleep again. All is quiet except the quacking of the ever-present duck eating the swill out of the gutter.

Dad, I saw this and wrote it down as it happened on the back of an order. It was peculiar I should be moved by my "moose" to write it, but I did. Now in the best known part of France on my way to the outfit, in a British officers' rest house, I am copying it and sending it to you.

If you had been in that village and seen those lads swinging by, you too would have pulled out a piece of paper and written something, far, far better than I have. I am sending you this knowing you will understand. You and Becky do. God bless you, Father of mine, and my only regret is that we did not come to an understanding of each other sooner. It would have been a lot better were it so. There are to be some dandy talks between "me and thee" when I return. Long, confidential chats which none would understand or appreciate except us.

Father of mine, we have both erred—I in fearing you and respecting and worshiping you from afar instead of getting close to you and finding out *why* you were what you are so I could better follow your trail.

You in failing to try and make a pal of me. A few years ago I would not have gone to you had I been in trouble. *Now I know* you, I am a pal of yours, would go to hell for you or borrow four bits of your last dollar.

Do we understand each other now? All together, boys, "We Do!" Yours,

KID.

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN GOOD FELLOWS GET TOGETHER

BACK WITH THE COMPANY,
NOVEMBER 1, 1918.

DEAR FOLKS:

BACK again. I joined up today with the lads just as they were being relieved for a rest. They had done fine work and the morale of the league is high.

Jack Richards is now a captain and in charge of a company. He certainly deserves it for he did fine work up on the other front.

They have been sending all my mail to the central postoffice, so I guess it will be a long time before I get it again. I sure was some disappointed, but there will probably be a couple letters from you in the next batch, which should be in in a day or so.

This country, so flat, so desolate, so full of sorrow and suffering, makes me shudder to think what might have been the fate of America if we had not jumped in when we did. When I see the women so sad-eyed and the kiddies so listless I figure that might have happened to you and our kiddies, and I am glad I am here.

Winter has set in, a low, damp cold that cannot be kept out by any number of blankets or any amount of clothing. My bedding is way to the rear with my clothing roll and musette bag; when they catch up I will be better provided against the weather than I am now, if there is anything left in them.

It was certainly good to see my men again; quite a few have gone, but there are still a number of familiar old faces. They all seemed glad to see me and it warms

your heart to get back among people you know instead of being total strangers. In a small way it gives one an idea of what the big home-coming will mean; that will certainly be one big time of rejoicing.

This is the hardest time of the war. We all feel that the end of the blame thing is near, and the men having gone through safely thus far hate the idea of another action which might be the last battle of the war. I cannot really blame them.

THE KID.

CHAPTER XVIII

ANTICIPATION

SOMEWHERE IN BELGIUM,
NOVEMBER 2, 1918.

DEAREST GIRL OF MINE—

I AM staying here at the divisional headquarters to-night and tomorrow will join the outfit which is in the line. It's right glad I'll be to join them, also, for they sent Arthur back to the hospital when we were about to start from the replacement battalion and, consequently, I have had charge of a *big* bunch bringing them back to the division from the different hospitals. It has been a wild job and I have had my hands full.

It has been quite an experience traveling through this country so lately liberated from the Hun, for the marks of his wanton destruction and barbarity are seen everywhere. I am staying tonight in a beautiful old chateau with perfectly wonderful grounds around it. Fritz left in such a hurry he didn't have time to do it any damage, but some of the towns are a sight. Last night we stayed in a convent in a town which had at one time a population of about two hundred thousand. Now nobody lives there to speak of, but in coming out on the road today there were streams of people returning with their belongings. Carts, wagons, baby buggies and even little wagons drawn by dogs, all filled with household goods, while every person had some sort of a bundle. It was really a mighty pitiful sight.

The women here all show the strain they have lived under for the past four years by the big black circles under their eyes which are "sunken with weeping." The

kiddies don't know how to play or laugh; they just wander around, owl-eyed and as solemn as that old bird.

Day after tomorrow will be Pattie's first birthday. I will be in the line but I will be thinking of you and her on that day. I would, dear girl, that I could be home with you for the celebration—what a birthday party we would give her. I suppose you will have a cake for her and I know you will be thinking of me.

It looks now, honey, as though this fuss might be over pretty soon, but we mustn't look forward to it for fear of disappointments. We will just keep plugging and fighting along and try and act real surprised when peace is declared.

Well, girl of my heart, it's late now. I've had a hard time the last few days, practically no sleep, and as I have a mighty hard few days ahead of me I'm going to turn in. Pray for me, sweet girl, for I love you better than all else in the world, and pray to God for your happiness.

Just your boy,

MITT.

CHAPTER XIX

LA GUERRE FINIS

NOVEMBER 15, 1918.

DEAR FATHER OF MINE:

WE ARE only poor, weak mortals after all. So I'm going to sit down to have a quiet little chat with you. The armistice is on and we have changed from the strenuous life of a field soldier to the easy (?) going life of a barracks soldier with its parades and ceremonies and all of the petty little things that involve red tape by the mile.

While we were leading the hard life in the field, getting short rations of food, rest and sleep, the sedentary independent life of a prune rancher appealed very strongly. But now that we are leading a life of enforced idleness, the crispness of these early winter mornings makes the blood race in your veins and awakes that little restlessness found in most every man, and known as ambition. I don't believe I am ready to get out of the fight yet—I mean the fight that is going on in every large city, where the young men are fighting to gain the places at the top of the ladder which are now held by the big business men. My qualifications? I believe I possess that average amount of human intelligence. I have had a liberal education and have a smattering of most of the sciences, but am master of none. I have a broad back, am not afraid of hard work and have unlimited faith in myself and my ability to get along.

I guess that all sounds egotistical, but I feel full of pep and jazz this morning after a long night's sleep, and the morning is clear, crisp and bright. I know you don't

want me to go into the service of a big corporation to become a wage slave, and I believe I can see your point. The army is no place for a *man* in peace time—I can't consider it for a minute, even as a possibility. So I am up the creek and when I come back I am going to have a good long talk with you some evening about the whole thing. Then indeed we will make order out of chaos and settle the fate of nations.

There was great rejoicing yesterday at this Belgian farmhouse where I am staying. The old couple's nephew, a private in the Belgian army, returned after being separated for four and a half years; the old mother sow, left by the Germans, brought forth thirteen little porkers to help repopulated Belgium, and they found five out of a dozen hens that the Huns had swiped. Of all the clattering of wooden shoes and clacking of Flemish tongues. You never heard the like. It sounded like Market Street on a New Year's Eve.

How do you like the way things are going in Germany now? Did you like the terms of the armistice? We are all hoping that the Wild West division will be part of the army of occupation, and although it would probably mean some delay in getting home, still it would be something to talk about when you were old and toothless and sat in a chimney corner telling your grandchildren about the Last War. For now is the time, if ever, to form the League of Nations and do away with this sort of damphulishness forever. There is no more glory or glamour of war, the long-range guns and high-power rifles have taken away all of that. Most of the time you can't see the men you are shooting at and who are shooting at you.

Well, Dads, if they don't want peace when this thirty days is up, then I suppose we will have to force

them into it. We don't get any fun out of this fighting, but we will see the whole show through. The end is not far away and it will be a mighty happy day for this kid when he can clasp you by the hand again and look into your kind grey eyes and say "Dad, I done my damdnest."

Until then take good care of yourself, play plenty of golf and don't beat Mother too often. Best to the Britton. Just,

THE KID.

CHAPTER XX

RETROSPECTIVE

IN BELGIUM,
NOVEMBER 13, 1918.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN—S. T. V. B. E.—E. Q. V.

I ADMIT that I am an ungrateful cub and all that, and that you all have certainly been mighty fine in writing letters, sending newspaper clippings and the like, but since the Argonne drive, which started September 26th, I have been way off my feed until just quite lately. So I have decided to write a family letter of apology and try to give you some idea of where I have been, what I have seen, and any impressions I may have received.

Of the drive in the Argonne I'll not say much, because I am unable to put my thoughts on paper. I could tell you of it, but I simply can't write it. Suffice it to say that on the first day of the drive my canteen went dry from giving drinks to the wounded and late that evening in drinking from a brook I must have swallowed an electric eel, a 155-mm. shell or a hand grenade, for the next day I was some sick kid. It rained all that day and as I was without a slicker and got soaked and a good shot of gas, it merely added to my good nature.

The division stayed in until the night of the third or early morning of the fourth of October, and I was sent back to the hospital at noon of the third as I was too weak to stand up. While waiting for an ambulance at the first aid station Fritz started to shell the place and created some consternation among the wounded lying there. However, although he tore off a corner of the

shack, no one was injured. When the ambulance came (it was a Ford) they piled us in and away we went for a six-mile run down a shell-swept valley, creeping at a snail's pace along a corduroy road that was all torn up by shells. At the field hospital in the shelled area we met the Red Cross—impersonally—in the form of candy, tarts, cookies and cigarettes, and seconds and even thirds and no questions asked.

From there they loaded us into big three-ton trucks and we had a regular Jim Martin or Barney Oldfield for a driver, and back through the cold night we were hurled. Suddenly we pulled up at an evacuation hospital. We were cold, hungry, tired and dirty with the filth of nine days' fighting. We had not had hot food for a week, and the first building we were put in was the distribution ward. There we met real honest-to-God white women dressed in spotless white with the Red Cross caps on and they had a big fire going, lots of hot chocolate, candy and cigarettes, and a smile and a cheery word for all. How tenderly they fed the poor devils whose arms were bound up, lit cigarettes and put them in their mouths and poured hot chocolate out of feeding cups down the throats of the lads whose wounds were in the face and mouth. They were angels of mercy and every man had a "God bless you" for them. Then we were put in an officers' ward, undressed and put into a warm bed between white sheets. We had lived and slept in our clothes for so long that they actually stuck to our bodies. But, oh, the luxury of those sheets and hot water bottles. All that night I thrashed around, afraid to sleep, and the next lay there perfectly quiet, my whole body absorbing the luxury of it all. That night at midnight we were placed on a hospital train (Red Cross) and sent back to a base hospital at Bazoilles

near Neufchateau. There we were put through a cleaning house and scrubbed all over with yellow laundry soap and hot water with sheep dip in it and then shaved all over to facilitate the movements of the cooties. But the luxury of it all to feel clean again, be put into a new suit of canton flannel pajamas (four sizes too large), the gift of the Red Cross, and be put into a clean, white bed in a big cool clean ward, presided over by a fine matronly Red Cross nurse who tucked you in and made you comfortable. Then joy of joys, someone turned on a Victrola and played the Italian street song from "Naughty Marietta," and it sure was like home.

It was wonderful there. Every day or so the Red Cross chaplain would come in with candy, pipes and pipe tobacco, gum, cigarettes, paper and envelopes, handkerchiefs, shaving sets, tooth brushes and every luxury imaginable; from "the folks back home in the States," the parson would say. Also, every morning the daily papers were distributed so we could follow the drive in detail. The parson, whose name is Everett Smith, is a brother-in-law of Jack Richards, a lieutenant in my company at that time and who is now captain of our company. So the parson and I had some fine talks and he is a darn good man, full of practical religion.

On October 15th I found that they were figuring on evacuating me back further, and I feared I would never find my outfit if they did, so I put in for a return to duty and on the morning of the 17th I was discharged from the hospital. I went to the regulating station at Is-sur-Tille and from there obtained permission to go to Paris to get some clothes, as I was disguised as a private. I fell in with Art Erb while at the hospital and arranged it so as to get discharged the same day, so on we skipped to Paris by way of Dijon. From Paris we went

to Toul, then by various stages to St. Dizier, where I lost Art, as he had had a relapse and they sent him back to the hospital. At St. Dizier I picked up six hundred and thirty men of the division who were returning from leave or the hospital, and with them I started for Belgium by way of Paris, Amiens, Boulogne, Calais, Dunkirk, Ypres and Roulers, from which place we hiked out to join the division, which was then in the line. We caught up with it just as it was relieved and went into billets in an old convent. There we stayed for four days, putting on a minstrel show to which the sisters and Mother Superior were invited. They had never seen anything like it before and it was quite a sight to watch their faces as they looked on at the foolish capers.

We moved out next morning at daylight and hiked all day through a Flanders rain and Flanders mud, and billeted at night in a tiny Belgian village. The next day we rested, but the next morning at 2 a.m. we pulled out in the dark and marched out to encounter the enemy at daybreak. We pushed on through the day, meeting practically no opposition and billeted that night ready to push on and capture a high row of hills the next morning. The barrage was to start at nine forty-five, the attack at ten, and we were figuring on the map our route when the phone rang and the operator asked for the brigade commander, who was at our P. C. at the time. When the general hung up the phone he said, "Gentlemen, there has been a suspension of hostilities along the entire front." *Boy*, but that was a grand and glorious feeling!!!

Since that time we have been waiting here in our tracks, waiting for the word to move up to the Rhine, which is going to be some move, and I sure hope we are part of the "Army of Occupation." That will be some-

thing to tell your grandchildren about, and if it comes about I hope the U. S. don't forget and leave us there for a couple of years to police up the German Bolsheviki. If they do I'm afraid I'll be tempted to go A. W. O. L.

Belgium is a great little country, much cleaner, more fertile and more picturesque than La Belle France. Also, in spite of all it has gone through, prices are much better than in France, where the idea seems to be to rob the American soldier as quickly as possible. I'm off France for life. The Belgians, as we fight our way through their villages, which are as thick as fleas on a dog's back, wait at the doors and hand out rye bread sandwiches, milk and even beer to our lads as they go by. Always a smile and a cheer for us and a big hearty welcome.

The countryside is full of quaint sights and people. The other day I saw a girl plowing a field and the beast of burden was the family cow. Being dinner time the girl pulled a chunk of bread from her petticoat pocket, produced a small bucket from some place, milked the cow, ate her bread and milk, and went on with the plowing. And believe me, she was *some girl*, with a hand like a man, an arm as big as my leg, wooden shoes and no stockings.

The name "No Man's Land" was created in the Ypres sector and it is a fitting name for it. It was the worst scene of desolation I have ever seen and reminded one of some of Dore's pictures of hell. Try to picture a perfectly flat, boggy country stretching as far as the eye can see in all directions, cut up by frequent, sluggish, half-stagnant streams. Spot it with shell holes of all sizes so thick that it would not be possible to spread out a sheet without touching a hole, and not a sign of life in the country, no trees, no grass, nothing to break the monotonous stretch, not even ruins. At one

cross-roads, hardly discernible, was a low post with a sign on it, "Ici Poelcapoel"—and the name of a good-sized town. There was no town left, no ruins, not even a trace of a brick. It was dusk when I passed through and in the fading half light it seemed all the more desolate, and the only live thing I saw was a big slimy grey rat which slunk along the parapet of a deserted trench and disappeared down a dugout. Strewn about was the wreckage of four years of war. Big tanks lying deserted in ditches, all torn up; miles upon miles of barbed wire, deserted gun carriages and parts of equipment and clothing strewn all around. It reminded me somewhat of the dumping grounds on the Alameda marshes, intensified to infinity.

We have been very lucky as far as weather goes. Usually by this time all of Flanders is a sea of mud, but the last few days have been clear, cold and as bright as California's Indian summer. It was the holding off of winter that has brought this war to such a sudden termination. I suppose about the time we start to hike towards Cologne it will start to rain, but I guess it won't worry us much.

Well, kind people, I guess my verbal hemorrhage will stop now, as it is past bed time, and it's hard enough to get out of bed these mornings when one isn't sleepy. Drink my health at Christmas and New Year's dinners and believe the boy when he says that no matter where he is on Christ's birthday, he will be thinking of each and every one of you. May God bless you all, and may it be the best of Christmases for there will be "peace on earth." Next time I'll be with you, and here's hoping it will be considerable before that. A cheerio to you all.

Just,

MITT.

CHAPTER XXI

NEWS FROM HOME

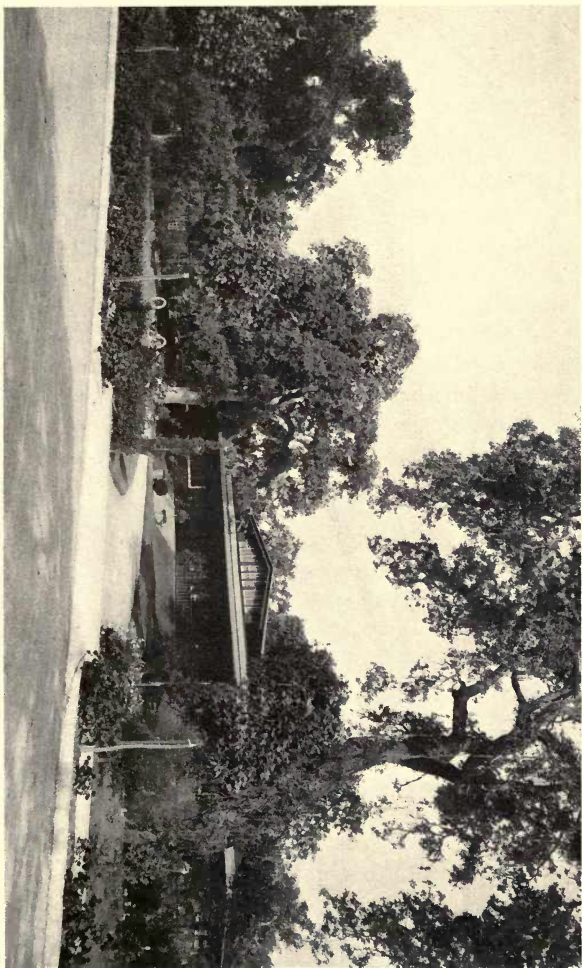
AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES IN BELGIUM,
NOVEMBER 30, 1918.
NOVEMBER 31, 1918.
DECEMBER 3, 1918.

DEAR PEOPLE ALL—

LAST night I received over sixty letters from you all, so today I feel in duty bound to try and answer them at one fell swoop by writing one "flusy" (instead of measley) little letter. I hope the letter makes you all feel achey (like the flu does) but I hope you will ache to gather me again into your collective bosoms, and not to get at me. The big batch of mail is all that has been misdirected to me (some of it dating back to July when the Dodo was rampant) and the rest of it mail that tried to follow me to the hospital but did not succeed. I certainly did have an orgy last night—the best party I have had since arriving overseas, for one of the packages Dad sent by the "King" arrived, and so I sat munching and reading until the "wee sma"—I believe it was 10:30 (or 22:30) when I turned in. (Pardon me while I switch to a pencil as this continental ink isn't worth a continental dam—please pardon, no pun was meant.)

You have all been so darn good about writing that I feel like a piker for not writing more often, *but* you all have me fussed to death, comparing my writing to Brother Jawn's, who has me backed off the globe when it comes to description.

This is really a great little country, full of wooden shoes and big Dutch windmills, red tile or thatched roofs and tile floors, cobblestone roads and turnip



"DUN MOOVIN,"
HOME OF MOTHER AND DAD, REDWOOD CITY, CALIFORNIA

patches. The people are a queer mixture, sort of a compote of Dutch, German and French, and speaking a most ungodly language they call "Flemish." It certainly makes one fling a nasty tongue to pronounce the names of towns and villages. However, we soon hope to be en route (by the Hob-Nail Route) to France where we will be able to talk fluently (?) with the natives.

Rambling through the country as we are we certainly find some peculiar places to flop when it gets dark. Sometime back we were quartered for the night in a large farmhouse, half of which had been all blown up by one of Fritz's Minnies, which do blow some considerable hole. Not having any bedrooms left, the whole family dragged in straw from the barn where the men were quartered and spread it on the kitchen floor for us to sleep. After supper there started a game of watchful waiting. We were waiting for the family to go to bed and they were for watching us. Finally we threw discretion to the winds, took off our boots and blouses, unfolded our blankets and lay down near the stove. The family with a *grunt* of satisfaction then huddled up in a ball in a far corner, blew out the light and the fight was on. Speaking of the Black Hole of Calcutta—well, it must have smelled like a sweet wildwood violet along side of this place, for on the stove they were cooking up a mess of buttermilk and sour potatoes and under the stove was a ten-gallon tin of sour milk which was to be churned in the morning. Well, silently, one by one, we slipped out, and I woke up in the morning to find I was lying on the cow's breakfast from which she was trying to nose me. Oh, it's a great life if you don't weaken, but these cobblestone roads hammer you all to pieces, and every bone in the old body aches at the end of a twenty-five-kilometer hike.

There is one thing that rather gets on our nerves, and that is the utter lack of charm or grace or modesty on the part of the women over here. Of course, all we ever meet are of the peasant class, but they have no hesitation about combing their hair or changing their shoes and stockings in front of you! Man, oh, man, let your conscience be your guide. But even at that there's nothing pretty in a hand-knitted wool stocking.

There is a clock in the house I am staying in now that instead of striking the hour by a bell, starts a music box going which plays for a couple of minutes. Quite a stunt, eh?

Received the large pictures of Becky and the babes today, and they made the kid a wee bit homesick. Gosh, you can't blame me, and now that this fuss seems to be over, you give way to little things like that and simply gloat over them a while before you fight them off. We want to get home in the quickest possible way, but it would be just our luck to be the Watch on the Rhine next Fourth of July. If we are, some infantry regiment I know of is going to be S. O. L. for a signal officer, for he will either be A. W. O. L. en route to the U. S., or he will be trying to drown himself in Pilsner.

I have been picking up pieces of lace here and there in this country and some of it I'm shipping to Becky, and other pieces I am going to bring home. They make some beautiful stuff up here, but an American soldier has no more idea of the value of a franc than a Boche has of straight shooting. Also, we can't tell a good piece of lace from a bum piece, so we simply grab a chunk that looks like something we have seen on a priest's vestments or a chorus girl's petticoat (from the front row of the Orpheum) jabber "combien" and lay down a handful of this tissue paper money. The girl sizes up

the pile, uses her own good judgment, shoves over a bunch of clackers and smiles a sweet "merci." Oh, this is a great life all right. Nothing ever goes along with any degree of evenness. You are either broke or flush, stuffed or starving, laying around or hiking your head off, going without any sleep or hitting it off for twelve hours a night. Civil life is certainly going to be irksome for a while for the National army men. They are going to find it mighty hard to go back to their law offices and ribbon counters, their pen-pushing, penny-seeking jobs, for those lads have done things and seen something of life. It will take some time for them to get back to the old life, and I fully expect it will take one generation to get things into a "before the war" frame of mind. They won't get down to serious thoughts, and just today as we were being deloused (or decootied) in a German bathhouse, two privates were talking about what was going to be done "apres la guerre." "Aw, hell," he said, "I should worry." Then at the top of his lungs, "What's the biggest river in the world?" "Powder River" came the roar, and "Let 'er buck." They are a bunch of irresponsible kids. They haven't had to use their brains for over a year, have gone it blind, and have been taken care of as though they were children, even to the castor oil. Many of them will never go back to inside jobs, and will only be satisfied with a good clean out-of-doors job. But they are damn good fighters and you can't help but like them. They are a great bunch of lads. Keep an eye open for us when we start home, for they expect some welcome, and they know San Francisco will give it to them.

Love to you all—we are on the go again.

MITT.

CHAPTER XXII

WAITING

LE THIEL, FRANCE,
JANUARY 5, 1919.

DEAR FATHER O' MINE—

LAST night I received your letter number twenty-two, dated December 1, and it is certainly "a grand and glorious feeling" to receive a letter like that. You don't know how I look forward to your letters, and in spite of a heavily laden musette bag, I always find room in it for your letters, and I believe I have your complete file. They help out a lot, especially when the mail doesn't arrive for three or four weeks, and like a good book or a good piece of poetry, they present some new thought each time they are read.

We are in the central part of France now, between Le Mans and Nogent le Rotrou, in a little village called La Thiel. I am billeted with one of the F. F. T. (First Families of the Town) and I take back all the nasty things I said about France. They still hold true for the parts of France I was in at that time, but this neck of the woods is far different. The people, town, streets and even the kiddies are clean, and I have seen what I thought I never would see in this country—an honest-to-God bath room with a real tub in it. It is in this house, and while I have never heard of anyone using it, I am still living in hopes that it will turn out to be more than an ornament. It may be one of the Lares or Penates of this household, and if so, I don't want to insult these good people in my bum French by offering to desecrate it for them. Let one of the family but set foot on the edge of it, however, and I'm going to run in

the kitchen and yell in my best French, "Next on the bathtub."

Another startling discovery I have made is that you can't make a fire burn in a French fireplace by using American methods and cussing at it in good old American mule-skinner's talk. No, you must fix the wood as if you were trying to keep it from burinng, talk to it chidingly as though talking to a child, kiss one end of the log and turn your back to it, resolved to let the damn thing alone and freeze to death. Then, in a few minutes, sneak up on it and you will find enough fire to warm the calves of your legs, if you take your puttees off, but have your "puts" off before you begin the sneaking-up process, for as soon as that fire realizes that there is a foreigner in the room it gets sick. I was considerably worried about the action of that wood for a while, but now I know it is cut by German prisoners.

For a while we believed that we would embark about the end of this month or the middle of February at the latest. But now we think we will be lucky if we get out of here by April. In the army rumors are rampant and are based on the most trifling incidents. The man that set up woman as the maximum of fickleness had certainly never put in a hitch in the army.

It is certainly a relief to get away from Belgium with its mud and fat, stupid people. This part of France is just like old California, and it certainly is great to be able to feast one's eyes upon the green rolling hills. The people here are kindly and generous to a fault, and I have been received into the family of M. Ligereau as a son. Mother L. puts flowers in my room every morning and very carefully dusts off the pictures of Becky and the Cyclone and Dresden Doll. God bless them. I'll hardly know them by the time I get back.

I'll bet you had some Christmas and New Year's. Mine were pitiful, but as I don't believe in self-pity I couldn't feel at all sorry for myself. I managed to pass the day by a pot-bellied stove that wasn't designed to give out heat, and served champagne and Scotch during the afternoon to all comers, and in the evening won five francs in a game of bridge with Art Erb as my partner against Bill Baily and Cap Christian.

New Year's Day was a dry one as far as I was concerned, as I was suffering from another touch of my old friend who sent me to the hospital. In fact, he comes around to see me about one or two days a week and always hits me. I'm going to shake him, though, once I get off the army ration.

Best love to you and my "Shorty," and give a "bon jour" and cheerio to all the rest of those I love who love me. Just,

THE KID.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FUTURE

NOGENT LE, 1.OTROU,
JANUARY 17, 1919.

DEAR FATHER OF MINE—

YOUR dandy letter of December 22d-26th received yesterday and it was sure a dandy and made the Kid feel pretty blamed well. I don't know just how to put it, but I had to move the second button on my blouse and order a new cap. You are going to spoil me sure if you haven't already done so, with all of your blarney, and I'm afraid I'll sprain my arm trying to pat myself on the back.

Have received all the "Pacific Service" magazines up to date, the last one received being the November issue, and you can tell Fred Myrtle to get in training for a three-round go for printing those letters of mine as he did. Also, tell him that while I am wearing a gold chevron on my left sleeve, my right sleeve is devoid of any decoration, and thank God that it is. Also, Dad, that thing re-fear was for private consumption. I was darned badly scared *several* times—you realize the difference, but I'm afraid that most of the readers of that article won't, and they will put me down for a boasting braggart. However, public opinion won't break up my happy home, so us should worry. Eh, wot?

So, Daddy mine, I'm coming home with my mind made up to cut loose from the P. G. & E. and look for a new field of endeavor. But if I am lucky and make good in my new field and make a name for myself and the P. G. & E. should make me an offer, I'm afraid that I would be pretty muchly tempted by my first love.

For, God knows, in the hills I gave the P. G. & E. all I had of loyalty, and there were many twenty-four-hour shifts in a row during the hard winters that did not show on my time cards. I know that South Yuba System, Dad, I believe better than any man in your head office, and some day when I get back I'm going to tell you a few things about it that the mountain people I loved, and who loved me in their rough way, told me about. But it will wait. In the meantime, Dad, keep your off ear open at the clubs, for, remember, when I take a job I'll have three mouths to feed, and the job must have a future. I don't care where I go—Alaska, South America, the Orient or Europe—and I'm not afraid to sign up a three or five-year contract, and, boy! I'm a bear for hard work; I like it. That's one reason I'm off this army game. Under war conditions it's O. K., but now, under peace conditions, there is too much sitting around and answering "by endorsement hereon." To Hades with this sitting around waiting for some one to die before you can move up a peg. That is too slow a system for me; if I'm better than the man ahead of me I want a crack at his job, and if the man behind me can handle my job better than I can I'm willing to give him a chance at it; but he had better burn hard coal, for I'm sure going to try and take it away from him if I can.

You know my qualifications better than I do; you can get letters of recommendation from Jim Martin, and, I believe, P. M. D. I am almost (four more days) twenty-seven years old. I stand five feet eight inches, and weigh about a hundred and sixty—not much fat on me. I have had a good general education. I believe I possess the average amount of human intelligence. I write a poor hand, but I can always dictate to a good steno. I am married, have two children and am deeply

in love with my wife. I drink an occasional glass of beer and smoke Bull Durham and P. A. (the joy smoke), the latter in a regular "jimmy pipe." I am an Episcopalian by religion (when I get it) and Scotch-Irish (not a Sinn Feiner) by descent. How much am I bid?

We expect to leave here by the middle of February, which should land us at Camp Lewis or Fremont by the middle of March at the latest. If I am able to I'll cable from this side when we start, but if not, then I'll sure stretch some liberties to cable from New York, or wherever we land. Oh, Boy, won't that be a grand and glorious feeling? We have dreamed of it so much and for so long that when we do really land it isn't going to seem real. This whole fracas over here now just seems like a bad dream, and I believe that if we go back to Camp Lewis and into our same old barracks that we will have a hard time persuading ourselves that we ever were away at all.

Had a fine time by myself yesterday morning. On top of hill on the outskirts of the present town stands the old castle of Rotrou, the first he built in 1024, being the lord of this community at that time. The old town is all huddled around it, for protection, for all the world like a bunch of fuzzy chicks gathered around a mother hen who has spotted a hawk in the sky overhead. The grim, grey eastern tower is in ruins and the ivy has grown out of the moat and entwined itself around the buttresses and pilasters, while the loopholes that at one time sent out grim harbingers of death in the form of cloth yard arrows now give life to those coal black, repulsive carrion crows. They seemed to fit into the picture perfectly, for probably their ancestors had dined well out of the moat which is now empty and choked with rank grass and weeds.

As I sat there in the warm sunshine, on the edge of the moat, I thought of Mallory and Tennyson, of Rich Coeur de Leon, and of Ivanhoe, and I had the time of my young life. I later inspected the battlements and would probably have gone farther had not the caretaker seen me and given me the run. On the safe side of the barbed wire entanglement (by courtesy called a fence) I again looked the old heap over. Now that I have seen a real "he castle" I think I'll be able to read medieval stories with more interest. I think as I left I muttered a couple of "Od's Bloods" and "S' Deaths" between my cuspids, and putting my left hand on my hip to keep the sword (?) from between my legs, strode down the hill to talk to my naughty varlets on radio telegraphy. That nine-century jump backwards was a hard one to take.

Have you read Kipling's "Hymn Before Action" lately? Try it. I think you will find it fits the tongue nicely even now.

Well, Daddy, must be stepping out now to see that the men are ready for their hike back to Le Thiel tomorrow morning. I believe I have the greatest platoon in the world. Up in Belgium they finished a forty-kilometer hike under full packs, singing like it was the start. They sing wherever they go and while they kid each other along all the time, woe be unto the man who grouses.

By the time you get this letter I hope we will be embarking, so you would better put the calf on a corn diet. Even if I don't get home until July I want some hot mince pie with ice cream. I think we all have missed hot mince pie more than any one article of food during the holiday season.

For the present, bye-bye. Give my love to those

that I love who love me, but keep a whole chunk of it out for yourself and Mother mine.

I am still—and always will be—Just,

THE KID.

CHAPTER XXIV

STRAY THOUGHTS

LE THIEL,

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 1919

DEAR FOLKS AND ALL—

SUNDAY in France—snow all over everything—a batch of letters from home. Picture me, if you can, in a typical French cottage on the outskirts of the town, sitting in a funny little bedroom while I keep warm by an American stove which is kept full of bum French coal which my Swede striker (or orderly) John L. Sullivan swipes from the railroad, or God knows where. He has his orders to keep this fire going and, being a good soldier, he asks no questions, but obeys.

I have just finished reading John's letter in which he tells of his visit to Vladivostok, and it was a dandy letter. There are three phrases that hit me funny, though, when he was describing the town. He said he had to sleep on an "uncomfortable army cot" and had "only four blankets." I have seen many a time when a fagot of straw and one blanket in a ruined Belgian farmhouse looked like the Palace Hotel, and you had no scruples about coaxing a flea-bitten, Belgian cur full of cooties, to sleep alongside to help keep you warm. Then he said he "hadn't had a bath for nine days!" Why, the dirty thing! When I hit Le Thiel I hadn't had a bath for nine weeks, and since I have been in France I have had just three tub baths. One in Paris, one in Meulbeke, in a German delousing plant, and one here in Le Thiel. And as for varmints—for activity, meanness and general sticktoitiveness, I'll put the present day cootie against anything its weight in the world. They started

with the Russians, at that time being small, inoffensive little critters, but the Prussians got 'em from the Russian dugouts and brought them to the Western front. They were neutral cusses and played back and forth between the lines, so by the time we came along they were a mixture of Russian, Prussian, German, Austrian, British and French cooties. And my, how they did thrive. They are tenacious as a young bull pup, but we are gradually shaking them off and while they are not in the least particular when or where they feed, they never go to the same place twice. One of my men came in for a new undershirt the other day as his old one was torn in half. It seems he took it off one day for a few minutes and while it was laying on the floor half the population decided to move north and the other half to move south with the result that the strain was too great and the fabric could not stand it, but ripped squarely down the middle of the back! Needless to say, the man got the new shirt. If a bed-bug ever gets on one of these men it will feel like a lone steer trying to feed on a pasture that a flock of sheep have been over. And if a couple of cooties ever find that bed-bug trespassing they will chew him up so badly that his own mother will sing, "Oh, Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight." John and I ought to be able to swap some pretty good lies when we get together.

I am enclosing a poem which is sad but true, and while not couched in the best of meter and rhyme, it expresses our sentiments. Would you see, Dad, that Ed and Becky both get a copy of it? I'd type it over here but I'm a darn poor steno, so thank you.

We are lying here in the debarkation area waiting for our orders to hit the home trail which should come when we are fully equipped, etc. But as there are about

twelve divisions in the same area all trying for the same thing, I wouldn't be at all surprised if we didn't get out of here until the middle of April. So please don't stop writing until you receive a cable from me actually stating that I'm on my way. For I may not come home with the division. They need a bunch of officers over here for M. P. work, R. T. O.'s and as construction superintendents for the labor battalions, and are asking for officers to volunteer for those jobs. To show you how popular the idea is there wasn't a single officer from this regiment that volunteered. You know the army system well enough to realize that when we fill out qualification cards before we go to the port of embarkation and they see mine they will say: "Fine, one too many officers in that outfit anyway. We will just keep this one for six months or so." Sometimes I wish I had kept a boot-black stand in civil life. Well, if it comes, perhaps it may all be for the best, although it is sometimes darn hard to see it that way.

Art Erb and I have put in for a leave together—you know they call us the Siamese twins—and we are going away out on the point of the Bretagne coast and just loaf around for a week. We hope to get to some tiny little fishing village and just lead the simple life, perhaps going out with some peculiar old Breton for a day or so. We figure we will have a better time than if we went to Nice or the Riviera where we would have to keep dressed up all the time. If we are kept over here we are going to see London, Scotland, Rome, Naples and Venice before we come back, as England and Italy have been opened up as leave areas now. It would be a little consolation, but not so very much, as we both want to see California's hills in the spring time pretty badly. Well we may at that.

This is a mighty poor letter, people, but it's a cold gloomy day and I'm afraid I'm susceptible to the moods of the weather. However, these few lines I have scratched down will serve the purpose to tell you all that I'm feeling pretty good for an old man of twenty-seven (five days ago), enjoying my normal good health and hope and pray that we quit marking time pretty soon and step out for St. Nazaire or Brest. When we mount that old gangplank, Oh, Boy! Hold tight! I hope you have received my telegram by this time telling you that the prodigal son is "Homeward Bound."

Mitt.

CHAPTER XXV

FRIENDSHIP

NOGENT LE ROTROU,
FEBRUARY 19, 1919.

DEAR PEOPLE ALL:

BACK to the old stand again, but hardly ready for business. My two weeks' vacation was a good one but all the joy has been taken out of life. It is hard enough to come back to a six o'clock reveille and squads east and west, after two weeks of eleventh-hour risings and days of luxurious ease, but it is doubly hard when you find an order transferring your buddie to the Army of Occupation, especially when the two of you had been planning on what you were going to do as soon as you got out of this man's army. But such is life in the army.

I have never had a closer, better or truer friend than Arthur Erb, and a finer lad never trod the face of God's green earth. Fearless, a brave fighter (many less brave were awarded the D. S. O.) an excellent officer and one of those "rara avis," a gentleman. We have fought together, slept together and shared each other's last tin of bully beef, last sou, and even shared our letters if a mail happened to be at all partial. We have been buddies in the finest sense of the word and a friendship that has been as constant as ours has for two years is not easily broken. It is not possible in civil life to have a friendship as close as one forms in the army. You see your friends at most an hour a day and pass the time pleasantly with them. You have other friends, other amusements, other interests. In the army you have your buddie—what is yours is his. You never go anywhere if you can help it without him, and you look to

him as he looks to you, for amusement, entertainment, solace or congratulation. If he has a stroke of luck you feel better about it than if it had happened to you. So tomorrow Art and I part company for a long time. As long as I am in the army I'll never have another friend like Art; I'll play the game alone, for another I might go with could never take his place and would only tend to cheapen what has been a wonderful friendship.

Art is all broken up about going. In Belgium where he signed up for the army, I tried to dissuade him, but he would insist on it. Well, here's a prayer that he won't be kept over here very long, for he will resign as soon as it is possible.

Whatever this Rocky Mountain Club is, it is in a fair way to become the most unpopular institution, next to the Prohibition League, in the United States. There is no sign, as yet, of our departure and we are without any mail. How in Sam Hill this R. M. C. is going to distribute our mail when we land is more than I can tell, for we are going to be split up geographically before we leave France. That is to say, all of the men drafted from Northern California will make up a provisional regiment to be sent to the Presidio for demobilization, those from Southern California to be sent to Camp Kearny, etc., so you can imagine the job the R. M. C. is going to have. I have received no mail since the 26th day of January when I went on leave, so of course, I expected a big pile yesterday—but there was a letter from Ed., one from Dad (a carbon copy—the original of which had been sent to the R. M. C.) and one letter from Becky. And all of them said they didn't expect me to get them. Dear people, *please* keep on writing until I wire you from New York or even phone you from the Presidio, for some of us are sure to be left

over here on different jobs, and if I am elected I want the mail, for it certainly is a life saver. Do please keep on writing to the same old address. Please!!!

I guess those are about all the kicks I have at present so enough for them.

From the postals I sent to you along the way I guess you have most of the places I struck while on leave and we had some time. From now on until we leave France I guess it will be all good hard work and no play, for we have to keep the men occupied in some way.

Art and I are now going for our farewell walk and talk and I know I will feel more like tears than anything else.

So for the present, bye-bye, but I'll write to you all about our trip in a few days.

Just the same,

MITT.

CHAPTER XXVI

HOMEWARD BOUND

NOGENT LE ROTROU,
MARCH 2, 1919.

DEAR DAD AND MOTHER MINE:

BY THE time you get this wee note Lil' Emy will be facing the billows of the mighty Atlantic westward bound or crying his eyes out in some darn replacement camp. There is but little chance of the latter, however, and as the division has to be clear of St. Nazaire by the first of April you may expect to see my portly form come waddling up Market street some time between the tenth and twentieth of April. Listen to us people—all we sit and talk about now is what we are going to eat when we get back—and what good shows (funny) there will be to take in. For we want to forget as much as possible all of the life we have gone through "over there." Of course, we won't mind telling you about all of our fights, trials and tribulations, but we want to lead a life diametrically opposed to the one we have been leading.

I sometimes wonder if we are not a lot coarser than when we went away. Well, if we are, when we get back to the land of bathtubs and finer instincts I'm sure that in a couple of weeks most of it will be washed off of us. Gosh, I'm going to have a hot bath every morning for six months after I get back to make up for lost time. It is nothing to wear a shirt over here for three weeks, and two weeks is considered proper for underwear. But I sure do look forward with great relish to a tub bath whenever I feel so inclined.

We are gradually getting rid of the cooties and other

accumulations of France so that when we hit the plank we will be as sweet and fresh as a new blown rose.

Well, people, there's a great day a coming and I'll be there.

It was certainly fine of Mr. Bowles to show that much interest in me and I will sure go around and see him as soon as I get into my civies. For from what I can learn jobs are mighty scarce on the coast now and will be a lot more so when this bunch hits it.

Did I tell you I saw Bob Monroe at Nice? He was down there taking part in the A. E. F. tennis tournament, and is a captain now. He asked after your health and wished to be remembered to you.

I was talking to Frank Postlewaithe the other day about what he intended to do after being mustered out and he figures on going into the import and export game. Says he believes it will be the biggest of America's new business on account of the large investment at present in shipbuilding. I think he is right.

Well, people, a month from today and I'll be "Homeward Bound," so pray for a speedy boat. Love to all the different varieties and best of love to you two.

THE KID.

CHAPTER XXVII

POST SCRIPTUM

AT HOME,
AUGUST 5, 1919.

WE HAD so many rumors about starting, and so many false starts from France that when we finally left Nogent le Rotrou, between Chartres and Le Mans, none of us could fully realize that we were really and truly "Homeward Bound" even though the band kept playing it. For three days we were kept in an isolation camp at St. Nazaire, and on March 20, 1919, boarded the U. S. Transport *Kentuckian*—"Oh, Boy, wasn't it a grand and glorious feeling!" The *Kentuckian* wasn't much for class or speed, but as one of my boys had it, "I'd have been content with standing room on a raft." After eleven days of uneventful coasting along the Atlantic we pulled up in the harbor of New York. The wind was blowing down the bay, bringing us the good old air of the U. S.—but it wasn't the wind that was responsible for the tears that rolled down our cheeks. Even the Goddess of Liberty, while she looked pretty good, did not get me, but when I saw Jim Rolph coming down to meet us on a big tug boat and a band playing "Home Sweet Home" I am free to admit I cried like a baby. Then, for two weeks we hung around Camp Merritt, all of us crazy to get out to "God's Country," but spending our hard-earned cash in New York every day we could get off. We didn't go to see light opera or war plays, but our delight was to eat real American food, see good clean comedies or grand opera and sleep in real American beds again. I was in New York twelve

times and I had twenty baths. That was one luxury I could not get enough of.

When we finally stepped on a train headed west, how slowly the time did go—it would make a long story to tell of the games of bridge whist, black jack and poker we risked our coin in to make us forget. We all sat up the night we crossed into California, and I lay awake in my bunk looking through the chinks in the snow-sheds at my beloved hills. In the morning we woke up in Sacramento, and noon found me again with my loved ones whom I had not seen for ten months. The memories of that day are mighty sweet, but not very clear, and that night when we again started for the "city that knows how" there wasn't very much sleep in the crowd. I stayed awake until we reached the Oakland Mole for I wanted to see the lights of San Francisco winking at me from across the bay.

You all know the rest—how we tried to march up Market street to the Civic Center—but you wouldn't let us. You read in our hearts that we were hungry for love and you opened up your hearts and gave us all the love you had, and it was too much for us all at once. Now when we try to tell you of it you won't listen. And while we swear up and down that we are all "fed up" with war, there are but very few of us that wouldn't put our shoulders behind Uncle Sam again and give him all we have if he really needs us in a righteous cause.

EMMET.



U. S. S. KENTUCKIAN

HOMeward BOUND—363d REGIMENT A. E. F.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TO A FRIEND

NOVEMBER 16, 1918.
SOMEWHERE IN BELGIUM.

JAS. MARTIN, COLFAX, CAL:
MY DEAR BOSS:

AS MUCH as I hate to say it, boss, I'm afraid you are a bit of a slacker as far as correspondence is concerned. With lots of time and not much to do, a steno handy and plenty of paper and envelopes, still I have not heard a word from you. Harry Pete came through with a dandy newsy letter, but nary a word from you or Uncle Bob. Now I'm going to return good for evil and show you I'm a good Christian, by writing you an account of my troubles and travels and *please* furnish the story of it to Uncle Bob and any other old timers whom you might think of that would still be interested in me. I hope all of my old friends haven't forgotten me, for I sure do some tall thinking of the days I spent in the high hills among the best of friends. Those were the happiest days of my life, and I wouldn't be at all surprised if I spent the Fourth of next July in Colfax, and put in the fifth on the Boardman. I'm still in the game and if the P. G. & E. needs me, I'm their man. I'd like to go back and start where I left off.

By the way, Boss, how about that proposition in China? Did you ever hear anything more about it? I think Becky and Sara would have great sport out of it. Have you seen Princess Pat lately? Becky tells me she is a regular French doll, and, believe me, I'm crazy to see her.

I left Camp Lewis June 18th on an advance detach-

ment from the division, and ten days later we sailed from "An Atlantic Port" better known as New York. We had an uneventful trip across the puddle except for a couple of sub scares that didn't amount to much. Landed at Liverpool and then by train to Southampton where we embarked for France. The trip across England was beautiful and we certainly did enjoy the lovely homes and beautiful countryside after eleven days at sea.

The trip across the channel was made at night and it was some rough. There being a scarcity of bunks, I slept on the floor of the dining salon and was unfortunate to pick an aisle, and every poor devil that got sick stepped on my face and stomach in his hurry to get to the starboard rail.

We landed in Havre on a beautiful morning, but the impression I got of France from that city was far from favorable, and it has been a lasting one. From there I went to school, in the eastern part of France, for four weeks, when I rejoined my regiment which was in training in central France. After two weeks' work there we started up to the front by easy stages on foot. We took part in the Saint Mihiel drive; we were in the beginning of the drive in the Argonne Forest and had ten days of hard fighting. We were cited for our action there, and as the king of Belgium needed some help, we were sent up here and were in the fight from the first of November until the armistice was signed. We were all ready to go "over the top," and fifteen minutes before zero hour received word of the cessation of hostilities. It was quite a dramatic moment and one I will never forget. We have had some damn hard fighting and have gone through hell looking death in the face in its most terrible form. We have had all of the horror of war so far and darned little of the glory of it, although the smiles and

welcome given one by the Belgians we have relieved make it seem a little more worth while.

Now that the fighting is practically over the boys are all talking about what they are going to do when they get home. The question is, now that we have done our bit, what are the employers going to do for those lads who went away and offered up their all to save that employer's business? Will they be given their old jobs or their equivalent back again? I have seventy-five men in my platoon, all of them high class men, as specialists have to be, men above the average, and only about five of them are sure about jobs when they are discharged from the army. Take my own case. Would you take me back at my old job at my old salary? Could you tell P. M. D. that the district needed me? I am afraid he would tell you that you have been getting along without me O. K., and should be able to continue to do so. Has business learned that it can get along with less help? If so, what are the boys of the National army to do when Uncle Sam says, "I'm all through with you lads. Go back to your homes—thank you."

It's a big problem, Boss, and it is going to need solving "toute de suite." Of course, a lot of the lads who held down desk jobs before will never go back to them. They have had a taste of outdoor life now and they would never be satisfied to go indoors. I look for a big movement "back to the earth" and a settling of a large number of homesteads in the Dakotas, Idaho and Canada. I also believe that there will be a large amount of construction work done and, if there is, *me for it*.

During the fighting all I could think of was that twenty acres of prunes, but now I'm rested up and feeling fine and full of pep, I know I'll want to get back into *our* game or into business life of some sort.

Please drop me a line and give me the real hop on Drum District. Harry Pete did pretty well, but I want to hear from *you*. Get that? Now please come through. Give my best to all the bunch in Colfax and Drum District, and make it seem personal as though I had inquired for each by name. To Sara and the kiddies my best love and I'm sure looking forward to the time I can stretch my kicks into your fireplace in the little grey home on the hill and have a good heart-to-heart with you.

Just the same,

MITT.

CHAPTER XXIX.

S. O. S.

When the other bird from the S. O. S.
Sits down to his steak and pie,
He proclaims his wrath with a scorching tongue,
And swears he'd rather die
Than count out cans of monkey meat,
And check off loaves of punk;
That he wants to fight and hit the gaff,
And a lot of other bunk.
He wears a good old campaign hat
And a pair of russet dogs;
He has a little mademoiselle
To share his dialogues,
While the man in arms contents himself
With a can of old "Corned Bill,"
He casually reads his undershirt,
For his literature is nil.
He wears a Stetson made of tin;
His dogs weigh many a pound,
When nightfall comes he builds his flop
And turns in on the ground.

You read a lot of phoney junk
About Y. M. C. A.s
But for all the fun the fighter has
You can bet your socks he pays.
Somebody says down in "Paree,"
There's a "Y" there that's a bear,
But the front-line troops don't benefit,
For the S. O. S. are there.
Up where the big boys scream and howl—
And there's gas and hell and all,
They're a myth, these red triangle men,
Up where your comrades fall.

Here we'll have to pause and say
 A kind word for a chap,
He's the good old Red Cross man—
 He goes up where they scrap.
He passes out all that he has
 And does it with a smile,
While the other bloke grabs for the francs
 Like a miser o'er his pile.

Back to the bird in the S. O. S.
 With a sorry, doleful plight,
Who really hates to count shoe strings
 And thinks he wants to fight.
I crave to take these burning youths
 By their soft and slender hands
And lead them to the scene of hell
 That's bound by moral bands;
But it's now too late and they're going back—
 These boys from the S. O. S.
They'll be the heroes from "over there"
 And we'll stay here till we rot, I guess.
They'll tell of how they drove the Huns
 From the Marne to the River Vesle,
While the man who actually bit the chunk
 Is still reading A. E. F. mail.
They'll tell of how they took the heights
 Of dizzy Montfaucon,
And in the siege of the Argonne woods
 Of how they carried on.
We'll occupy "der Vaterland"
 As we are doing now
And eat that Chinese Army grub
 Better known as "Raw Tin Chow."

Some day, perhaps, our scow will sail,
 And take us across the foam;
But the only thing to welcome us
 Will be the fact we're home.

The cheering throngs with welcome arms
Who meet our brave (?) S. O. S.
Will be dispersed, and passers by
Will say, "More of these birds, I guess."

But we'll always know who stripped the Boche
And bridged the River Vesle,
Who reduced the salient of St. Mihiel
And stormed the Argonne trail.
The S. O. S. will spill their load
And pull the hero stuff—
But when the fighting men come home,
Say! Watch us call their bluff.

SGT. C. J. MEIGS,

Fourth Engineers.

CHAPTER XXX

HEADQUARTERS Co., 363D INFANTRY,
A. E. F., A. P. O. 776,
NOVEMBER 30, 1918.

FROM 1ST. LIEUT. EMMET N. BRITTON.

TO MRS. L. M. JUDD.

SUBJECT: PRESENT STATUS OF FRANCIS LEE JUDD.

MY DEAR MRS. JUDD:

I HAVE just received the letter written on November 6th, 1918, by your son-in-law, F.W. Herbert, and asking for the particulars of the death of your son, Francis L. Judd.

Through some error Lee was reported dead instead of seriously wounded, and I cannot tell you how sorry I am that this mistake should have occurred, nor do I know of any reparation that can be made to you for the suffering you must have endured.

Your son, Lee, was a member of my platoon and was with me when we went over the top on September 26, 1918, in the Argonne sector. While going through the Bois de Cheppy, about fifteen miles northwest of Verdun, we were subjected to heavy shell fire, one shell dropping in a group of my men and inflicting heavy casualties among them. Lee was in the group and when I came back to administer first aid I saw him and gave him a drink of water from my canteen. He seemed very weak but still alive and apparently not suffering very much. Then, as I was needed up on the front line and the medical department were coming up through the woods, I knew my men would be taken care of and moved out.

That night I heard that he had died and I assure you that it was with a great deal of sorrow that I heard the report. I had picked out your son as one of the regimental section, which was composed of men in whom I put a great deal of faith. Their work was of the hardest and they came through in good shape. I had always liked him for a good, clean, intelligent lad and had never found him otherwise than a good, willing intelligent worker.

On the ninth day of the fight I was sent to the hospital sick, and on rejoining the company was certainly pleased to hear that Lee had been heard from, being at that time in the hospital and getting along nicely. As far as we know he is still in the hospital, and probably by this time you have received other letters from him which have convinced you of the error made.

Allow me to congratulate you on having a son that is a brave man, a good soldier and a good comrade. I certainly hope that when he is discharged from the hospital he will return either direct to you, or, if that is impossible, then to me.

Yours very truly,

EMMET BRITTON.

*1st Lieut. Comdg. Signal Platoon,
Hdq. Co., 363d Inf.*

CHAPTER XXXI

COPY FROM NEWSPAPER CLIPPING

WORD TO MOTHER.

FIRST LIEUTENANT BRITTON WRITES AFFLICTED PARENTS IN
CLOVERDALE OF SON.

THE following letter was published in the Cloverdale Enterprise last week, January 5, 1919, which was sent to a mother, Mrs. C. Arthur Baker, who lost her son in the service "over there" and was written by First Lieutenant Britton. The letter is as follows:

MRS. MATTIE BAKER:

Dear Madam—Your son, C. Arthur Baker, was one of my most trusted men and his loss has been very keenly felt by all of us; we not only miss him as a good soldier and a good operator, but we miss him as a comrade. He was loved and respected by all of the men in the platoon and the company, and I had recommended him to be promoted to a corporal.

I feel you will feel perhaps less keenly the loss of the lad if you know the details of the incidents that led up to his death. We went "over the top" at 5:30 a. m. on September 26th, our duty being to drive the Hun out of some very strong positions in the Argonne Forest, which he had held since 1914. About 10 o'clock that morning we set up the Regimental P. C. (Post of Command) in a small wood near a deserted farmhouse that had been blown all to pieces. This wood is about midway in the triangle formed by the towns of Very, Cheppy and Aubreville. The nearest large town is Verdun, which is about twenty miles east of this place.

The advance had been so rapid that we had been unable to string wire fast enough to keep up, so as a message had to be sent some way, we set up a radio station and Arthur acted as operator. It was while he was sending a message that the Hun began shelling the woods. I was standing alongside of the boy when he was struck by a shell fragment which hit him in the left breast. Death was instantaneous and he died in my arms. As the next shell demolished the set, I picked up the rest of the equipment and hurried out of the woods which were heavily shelled.

The front line pushed on and we followed for five days of heavy fighting and four days of holding on before we were relieved. At the end of that time I was sent to the hospital, and I have just rejoined the company. You will receive shortly all of the lad's personal possessions which he had on him.

My heart goes out to you in this trouble, but it is some consolation, I know, for you to be able to feel that your boy died to save you from the fate of these Belgian women we see every day. Your son was a brave man, a good soldier and a good Christian. He died for his country and humanity on the field of honor. Assuredly, God will not forget those who have died, even as His Son died—to make the world a better place to live in.

Believe me, Mrs. Baker, to be yours very sincerely,

EMMET N. BRITTON,
*1st Lieut. 363d Infantry Co., Signal Platoon,
A. P. O. 776, Headquarters Co.*

CHAPTER XXXII

REGISTER OF SERVICE

- 1917— May 4—Entered First Officers' Training Camp,
Presidio, San Francisco.
August 14—Commissioned Second Lieutenant, R. O.
T. C.
29—Arrived at Camp Lewis, Washington.
- 1918—January 21—Commissioned First Lieutenant.
June 19—Left Camp Lewis.
20—Spokane, 7 a. m.
21—Missoula, Mont., 6 p. m.
22—Minneapolis and St. Paul.
23—Chicago, 3 p. m.
24—Rochester and Syracuse.
25—Camp Merritt, 8 p. m.
26—New York.
27—Boarded S. S. *Cretic*, New York.
28—Left New York harbor at 11 a. m.
- June 29—July 10—On the Atlantic.
10—Arrived at Liverpool by train to South-
ampton.
11—Sailed from Southampton on S. S. *Prince*
George, 8 p. m.
12—Havre, 8 a. m.
14—Left Havre at noon.
15—Noisy-le-Sec (near Paris).
16—Neufchateau (S. of Nancy), Gondrecourt.
- July 16—August 17—First Corps School—Signal Work.
17—Left Gondrecourt for Mandres, near No-
gent (District of Haute-Marne).
20—Montigny-le-Roi.
21—Donnemarie.
22—Odival.
23—Mandres.
29—First letter from Becky. Her No. four.
31—Ageville.

- September 4—Mondres to Rolampont.
6—Rolampont to Gondrecourt.
7-10—Bois de Epizez.
11—St. Germaine (near Toul) St. Mihiel drive.
13—Pagny-sur-Meuse.
14—Conde on Barrois.
17—Foucaucourt.
18—Forest of Argonne near Cleremont.
19—In reserve in Bois de Hesse.
19-24—In reserve in Foret de Hesse (Argonne Forest).
25—Took over front line trenches from the French.
26—Over the top at 5:25 a. m.—captured Very and Epinonville.
27—Pushed line ahead to Eclisfontaine. Gassed.
28—Held at Eclisfontaine.
29—Pushed ahead to Tronsol Farm.
30—Held up at Tronsol Farm.
- October 1—Captured Tronsol Farm and dug in.
2-3—Holding on, waiting for relief.
4—Evacuated to Hospital at Froidois.
5—Arrived at Base Hospital No. 42, near Neufchateau (Bazoilles).
6-16—Base Hospital No. 42.
17—Returning to duty, Is-sur-Tille.
18—Is-sur-Tille to Paris via Dijon.
19—Paris—left at 8 p. m. for Toul.
20—Toul to Bois de l'Eveque—First Corps Replacement Battalion.
20-27—Bois de l'Eveque.
28—To Sommelomme via St. Dizier.
29—Entrained at St. Dizier for Belgium.
30—En route to Dunkirk via Amiens and Boulogne-sur-Mer.
31—Calais at 8 p. m.

All-night
hikes.

- November 1—Roulers via Dunkirk. Billeted in ruined convent.
 2—Roulers to Iseghem.
 3—Iseghem to Oostroosbeke.
 4-7—Rejoined 363d in reserve at Paanders.
 8—Moved up into support at Weregem Lede.
 9—Weregem Lede.
 10—Crossed Scheldt River at Audenard in the a. m. and drove as far as Tissenhove via Audenard.
 11—Ready to attack at 9 a. m. Received word of signing of Armistice at 8:55 a. m., five minutes before we were going over.
 12-17—Rokegem.
 18-20—Hoogstraat.
 21-22—Erwertegem (near Sottegem).
 23-25—Asper (near Gavere).
 26-30—Marialoop (near Thiel). Received 62 letters.
- Lys
Scheldt
Offensive

- December 1-3—Meulbeke.
 4—Licterveldt.
 6—Staden.
 7—Proven; 38 kilos to Staden across "No Man's Land."
 8—Watou—"In the Chateau."
 9-27—Watou (near Poperinghe).
 28—Left Watou 9 p. m.; raining hard.
 29—On the Chemin de Fer, leaving Belgium.
 31—Arrived Nogent le Rotrou 4 a. m. Hiked fourteen kilos to Le Thiel.

- 1919 — January 1-5—Le Thiel (near Le Mans).
 6-18—Nogent-le-Rotrou—Signal School.
 18-26—Le Thiel.
 27—Bellame. Reviewed by General Pershing in snow.
 28-31—Le Thiel.

February 1—Le Thiel to Versailles.

2—Versailles.

3—Moved to Nogent le Rotrou.

4—Nogent le Rotrou.

5—To Paris with Art—en route to Cette.

6—Cette-sur-Mer via Lyon and Tarascon.

7—Cette to Nimes.

8—Nimes—Avignon—Marseille.

9—Marseille to Nice.

10—11—Nice.

12—Menton.

13—Nice.

14—Nice to Nimes.

15—Nimes to Toulouse.

16—Toulouse.

17—Toulouse—Versailles.

18—Versailles to Nogent le Rotrou.

February 19—

March 15—Nogent le Rotrou—Waiting for the word.

16—It came—Entrained for St. Nazaire.

17—Camp No. 2, St. Nazaire.

18—Isolation Camp, St. Nazaire.

19—Isolation Camp, St. Nazaire.

20—U. S. S. *Kentuckian*, St. Nazaire.

March 21—31—On the Atlantic—Homeward Bound.

April 1—New York—Camp Merritt.

2—13—Camp Merritt—frequent visits to N. Y.

14—20—Headed west on a real train.

21—Hit California about 1 a.m. Paraded into Sacramento. Saw all the folks—Oh, Boy!

22—Hit San Francisco and elbowed our way up the Path of Gold to Civic Center.

22—29—Waiting for demobilization.

30—Honorably discharged from the United States Army.

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IN NEW PUBLISHED FORM FOR INFORMATION OF

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 6, 1918.



My Dear Mr. Britton:-

Although I have spoken to you of the satisfaction afforded me in reading the letter from your son to yourself, dated October 9th, I do not feel satisfied to omit making a written acknowledgment of the strong impression it made on me.

I read the letter to my wife and children, and have shown it to friends. It is such a human, manly document - so redolent of the trenches and the fighting front that it gives a picture strong and graphic.

I want to thank you again most appreciatively for your courtesy in sending me a copy.

In writing, I wish you would give to your boy an expression of my good will and my personal appreciation as one citizen, for the part he played in these epochal times.

With warmest personal regards, I am,

Yours sincerely,

CCM/MS

Mr. John A. Britton
445 Sutter St.,
City.

R. B. HALE
SAN FRANCISCO

Mr. John A. Britton,
Pacific Gas & Electric Co.,
San Francisco

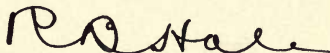
My dear John:

If my boy were called "The Kid", and would write me such letters as you have received, I would be even prouder of him than your boy appears to be of his Dad; and his letters indicate that he is exceeding proud.

It is a generally accepted belief that an illustrious father is rarely followed by an equally brilliant son, and tho you have made a wonderful record, of which we San Franciscans are all proud, you may have no misgivings in permitting your mantle to finally rest upon the shoulders of this lad, who knows what he is fighting for, fights like a man, and yet retains that human sympathy which is the foundation stone of true happiness.

I thank you sincerely for the great pleasure you have given me in allowing me to read these intimate family letters.

Yours very truly,



San Francisco,
November twenty-fifth,
Nineteen eighteen

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